

KINGDOM.

LESSON 12

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. Pray for God’s guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about preaching God’s kingdom to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] 2 SAMUEL 11, 12, 13 and 24
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Take turns and share (or read from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your personal times with God out of the assigned Bible passages (2 Samuel chapters 11, 12, 13 and 24). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) [KEY VERSES IN ROMANS] REVIEW KEY VERSES IN ROMANS
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Review two by two the last 5 memorised Bible verses from Romans.

- (1) **Romans 1:16.** I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.
- (2) **Romans 1:17.** For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith”.
- (3) **Romans 2:5.** But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when his righteous judgement will be revealed.
- (4) **Romans 2:15.** since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing , now even defending them.
- (5) **Romans 3:28.** For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

4	BIBLE STUDY (85 minutes) [THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS] ROMANS 3:21-31
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Introduce. In Romans 3:19-20, Paul concludes his teaching that no Gentile or Jew is righteous in God’s eyes and that everyone stands condemned before God. He also concludes that keeping the law cannot attain righteousness. In Romans 3:21-31, Paul teaches how righteousness can be attained.

STEP 1. READ.	GOD’S WORD
<i>Read.</i> LET US READ Romans 3:21-31 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

STEP 2. DISCOVER.	OBSERVATIONS
<i>Consider.</i> WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? <i>Record.</i> Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. <i>Share.</i> (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things)	

“Justification” first means to stand in the right relationship with the God of the Bible (the position or state of a believer) and secondly to do what is right in the eyes of the God of the Bible (the growth process or life-style of a believer).

“To be justified” means that the God of the Bible has *declared* someone completely and perfectly righteous in his eyes and consequently *regards and treats* him as completely and perfectly righteous (forgiven, reconciled) forever. Justification is a judicial act of the sovereign God.

Paul has proved that it is absolutely impossible for godless and wicked Gentiles or even religious Jews to be justified by their personal merits or obedience to God’s law. However the gospel proclaims that the Bible reveals God’s method for justifying (saving) people, namely, by God’s grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

3:21-24a

Discovery 1. Paul explains the nature of justification.

The required righteousness of God does not come by doing the works of the law. Already in the Old Testament the prophets testified about the righteousness of God that would be established through the Messiah, Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53:5-6). And now this righteousness of God is revealed in the New Testament.

This righteousness of God is acquired by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and is imputed (credited, ascribed, reckoned) to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ regardless whether he is a Jew or a Gentile.

There is no longer any differentiation between Jews and Gentiles, because all people are by nature depraved and are lost.

[Verse 22b and 23 is a parenthesis which stands in a very significant relationship to both what precedes and to what follows. Verse 24 resumes the theme of verse 22a and expands it].

This righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ is offered to people by God's grace. It is completely free.

3:24b-25a

Discovery 2. Paul explains the ground of justification.

"Redemption" (Greek: *apolutrósis*) means the buying back of a slave or a captive, making him free by the payment of a ransom. The ransom (Greek: *lutron*) is the price to set a slave free. The ransom paid to redeem lost people is nothing less than the life of Jesus Christ which he gave "in the place of" or "for the benefit of" many (Mark 10:45; John 10:11; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He gave himself as a voluntary sacrifice of atonement (John 3:18; 1 Peter 1:18-19). The ransom is paid, not to Satan, but to God the Father. By his death and resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ himself has become and now is the righteousness and holiness and redemption of the Christian (1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 2:4-7).

God's perfect holiness and righteousness demanded that all sins (unholiness and unrighteousness) in the history of the world had to be punished and that all people in the history of the world had to live perfect righteous and holy lives. Because no one in the history of the world except Jesus Christ lived an absolute perfect holy and righteous (sinless) life, only he qualified to be the sacrifice of atonement that could ransom people. The sacrifice of atonement (Greek: *hilastérion*) (that which expiates or propitiates, the means of expiation) is the sacrifice that satisfies God's holy and righteous anger (indignation) against sin and removes sin itself and its consequences. By his "blood", that is, his death and resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ himself became the One who turned aside God's wrath and took away our sins. The sacrifice of atonement was thus a substitution sacrifice, a sacrifice in the place of sinners.

3:25b-26

Discovery 3. Paul explains the purpose of justification.

During the Old Testament period (the period of preparation) God often tolerated the sins of his people. It seemed as if God was unjust, because he did not punish the people that sinned.

But during the New Testament period (the period of fulfilment) God showed that he was both righteous and merciful through the sacrifice of atonement of Jesus Christ. God is completely righteous because he punished all the sins of believers *once for all in history* through the death of Jesus Christ. And God is completely merciful by justifying believers and reconciling them to himself. God showed that he is perfect in character. On the one hand, God remains perfectly holy and righteous because he punished sin. On the other hand, God is completely merciful and loving, because he saves sinners. In the whole human history only the cross of Jesus Christ was able to reconcile the perfect righteousness of God with the perfect love of God.

3:27-31

Discovery 4. Paul explains the results of justification.

Because Jesus Christ earned perfect righteousness for believers in him, all boasting in the works of the law (keeping the law) is excluded. What Jesus Christ accomplished excludes everything people try to accomplish. The accomplishment of Christ excluded all boasting about the accomplishments of people. The principle (law) of *pretended justification* by doing the works of the law (keeping the moral, ceremonial and civil laws of Israel) is excluded by the principle (law) of *genuine justification* by faith in the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ.

Thus, a man is justified by faith apart from keeping the moral, ceremonial and civil laws (including the 613 man-made laws that the Jews added to God's law).

This justification presents God as he really is: not as the God of a specific group of people (the Jews), but *the God of all people* (Jews and Gentiles).

God justifies Jews and Gentiles in exactly the same way: namely through faith in Jesus Christ.

God's New Testament revelation does not suspend God's Old Testament revelation, but rather affirms it!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 3:1-31 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

3:21

Question 1. What is the meaning of the word "law" in Romans chapter 3?

Notes.

The word "law" (Greek: *nomos*) has several different meanings in the letter to the Romans and in the Bible.

(1) The "law" is God's holy and righteous requirement for all people (Romans 3:19b).

This law is fulfilled for believers by only Jesus Christ and no other human being.

God is a holy and righteous God. Therefore, on the one hand God requires that all sins must be punished and on the other hand God requires that all people must be perfectly righteous and holy and also live complete perfect, holy and righteous lives! This requirement of God is called God's "law" (Romans 3:19b) - God's holy and righteous requirement. See Romans 3:19-20.

(2) The "law" is the commandments, prohibitions and regulations contained in the Bible (Romans 3:10-18).

The ceremonial has been fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated.

The civil laws have been replaced by the Kingdom of God.

But the moral law remains valid.

There are three kinds of such laws in the Old Testament, which cannot be completely separated from one another, but can be roughly distinguished as follows:

First. The moral laws. The moral laws are God's holy and righteous requirement for the justification of all people. No one except Jesus Christ fulfilled this requirement. After a person has become a Christian, the moral laws are God's requirements how Christians (justified believers in Christ) should live as God's people. The moral laws are *expressed in the Ten Commandments and other moral commandments and prohibitions in the Bible. The moral law has never been cancelled or abrogated. It remains valid during the New Testament period as the rules for living the saved (righteous) Christian life.* The quotations from the Psalms and Isaiah in Romans 3:10-18 are examples of this law.

Whatever this "law" (meaning: the Old Testament Scripture) (Romans 3:19a) says, it says to all people in the world, because all people in the world are "included in the law"¹ (meaning: God's holy and righteous requirement) (Romans 3:19b). So the "law" is not just the Ten Commandments cut loose from the rest of the Old Testament, but all God's commandments, requirements and judgements found in the whole Old Testament. This law is not dead, but "speaks". One important function of God's Spirit is to convince people of sin, righteousness and judgement (John 16:8). God's Spirit makes the words in the Bible "alive" so that it speaks to the hearts, minds and consciences of people (Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Romans 3:19b says that all people in the world are included in (not under) God's law (meaning: God's holy and righteous requirement as expressed in especially the moral commandments and prohibitions in the Bible).

- Romans 3:19b says that the "law" (meaning: God's holy and righteous requirement expressed in the moral laws) *acts like a judge*. It silences every argument against the God of the Bible and his revelation in the Bible and makes people responsible to give an account to the God of the Bible.
- Romans 3:20b says that the "law" acts like *a mirror*. It shows people how they really are, how God sees them and how sinful they really are. It makes them conscious and painfully aware that they are completely depraved.
- And Romans 3:21a says that the "law" cannot act like *a saviour*. It cannot and does not reveal a way of justifying or saving people in God's sight. It cannot and does reveal a way of salvation (justification and sanctification).

Second. The ceremonial laws. The ceremonial or ritual laws are God's requirement how people should approach him in worship and prayer.

- During the Old Testament period these were expressed in various ceremonial laws, that consisted of:
 - laws about the temple
 - laws about priests
 - laws about the Sabbath and religious festival

¹ Romans 3:19. Not: "under the law", but "included in the law"

- laws about the sacrifices and offerings.

With the first coming of Jesus Christ there is a necessary change of these ceremonial laws (Hebrews 7:12).

- In the New Testament period Jesus Christ
 - *fulfilled* the ceremonial law (Matthew 5:17)
 - *cancelled* it (Colossians 2:14)
 - and *abrogated* (abolished) it (Ephesians 2:15).

The ceremonial laws are no longer valid in the New Testament period and may not be re-introduced into the New Testament Church (cf. Galatians 4:8-10; 5:1-7)! Celebrating the Old Testament religious festivals has been abrogated! During the New Testament period God seeks people who worship him, not with rituals, ceremonial laws or with religious festivals, but in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

Third. The civil laws. The civil laws are God's righteous requirement for managing the society (congregation) of his people.

- During the Old Testament period God's requirements how the national and political state of Israel should function contain laws about possessions, taxes, wars, handling diseases and sexual violations.
- In the New Testament God's people, Israel, is continued on a higher plane and enlarged to include believers from all the other nations. Therefore the civil laws of the state of Israel in the Old Testament have been replaced or perfected by the teachings of Jesus Christ about the kingdom of God in the New Testament.

(3) The "Law" is the Old Testament Scriptures or a part of it (Romans 3:19a,21b).

This law is the Old Testament part of the Bible.

The moral laws (God's holy and righteous requirement for condemnation and salvation), the ceremonial laws (God's requirements for approaching him and worshipping him during the Old Testament period) and the civil laws (God's requirements for regulating the society of Israel during the Old Testament period) are expressed in commandments, prohibitions and regulations that are written in the Old Testament Scriptures. That is why the whole Old Testament Scriptures are often called "the Law (Hebrew: Torah) and the Prophets" (Matthew 5:17).

But the Old Testament Scriptures contain more than just the moral laws, the ceremonial laws and the civil laws. It also contains salvation history, religious poetry and prophecies. Romans 3:21b says that the "Law" (meaning: the Old Testament Scriptures) "does reveal a way of making people righteous or a way of saving people apart from law" (in the sense of man trying to keep the moral, ceremonial and civil laws).

The Old Testament and the New Testament Scriptures reveal that:

- "righteousness" is an attribute of God and not of man
- this righteousness is required by the holy and righteous God of the Bible from every man
- this righteousness can only be acquired by man by receiving his righteousness as a gracious gift by means of faith (Genesis 15:6; cf. Galatians 3:6-9). God's righteousness can never be acquired by man "trying to keep the law" (by man trying to keep the religious works of the moral, ceremonial and civil laws)!

(4) The "law" may be a principle or system or method or order of things (Romans 3:27).

3:21-24a

Question 2. What is the nature, ground and means of justification or salvation?

Notes.

The nature of justification is that it is God's righteousness and not the righteousness of man.

The ground of justification is that God gives his righteousness freely by grace.

The means of justification is that man receives this righteousness of God (Christ) by faith.

"Christ Jesus is our righteousness" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

(1) The nature of justification

is God's righteousness, not man's righteousness (Romans 3:21,23).

Some people regard God's righteousness as righteousness that *comes from God (is given by God)*. Others regard God's righteousness as righteousness that is *approved by God*. And others regard God's righteousness as righteousness (of the believer) that *avails with God (can persuade God)* and can therefore justify the believer. However, the context makes very clear that God's righteousness here is nothing less than *the nature of God and the sole possession of God!* God alone is righteous and God alone possesses righteousness! It is never the righteousness of man!

The righteousness of God is also contrasted with the righteousness of all people. It is a righteousness "apart from law", that is, apart from even the best efforts of man to gain righteousness by keeping the moral, ceremonial and civil laws (Romans 3:21a). Even the most perfect human righteousness produced by trying to keep the law is never adequate enough to satisfy God's righteous anger against the situation created by human sins, nor adequate enough to meet his absolute standard of perfection for human conduct.

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). There is not a single human being who possesses “God’s glory”, that is, God’s holiness or righteousness or faithfulness or love. All human beings

- have lost their state of perfection in the fall into sin
- have lost God’s glorious characteristics
- consequently have lost God’s approval.

Therefore, the righteousness of God stands in absolute contrast to both the unrighteousness of man and the righteousness of man. The righteousness of God is never produced or acquired by people. The righteousness is characterised by God and is the possession of only God. God is the only Author of righteousness, the only Possessor of righteousness and the only Giver of righteousness! Therefore, it is the only righteousness which God approves and the only righteousness that avails with God (that convinces him).

(2) The means of justification

is that righteousness is acquired by faith alone (Romans 3:22).

The righteousness of God is not a righteousness of man, and therefore, in order to attain this righteousness, man must receive it from God, from God’s grace (God is the Giver) and receive it by faith (faith of the receiver). Man cannot acquire it, earn it or buy it from God. He can only receive it from God! He receives it by believing in Jesus Christ.

The believer receives the righteousness of God “not on account of faith” (Greek: *dia pistin*), but “through faith” (Greek: *dia pisteós*). Faith is *not* a kind of good work, which is *the ground or reason* why God justifies the believer. Faith is nothing more than *the instrument or means* (the empty hand) by which a believer in Jesus Christ receives the righteousness of God. The faith that justifies is also not a general kind of faith in something religious², but *a very specific faith in Jesus Christ* and in his death and resurrection.

The righteousness of God is given to everyone who believes in Jesus Christ without any distinction of race, culture or degree of faith. Since the first coming of Christ there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles:

- as to the way of salvation. The way of salvation is the same for all people (Romans 10:12).
- as to the state of their spiritual and moral depravity: “all have sinned”(Romans 3:23)
- as to the means by which they are saved: “by faith apart from observing the law”(Romans 3:28).

(3) The ground of justification

is that righteousness is freely given by God’s grace (Romans 3:24).

“They are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). This is the most important part of Paul’s doctrine of justification. There is nothing in human beings or done by human beings that constrains God to act or compels him to justify human beings. As a matter of fact, everything human beings are and do compels the righteous God to judge and condemn them.

The wonderful message of the gospel is that God’s justification of sinners is completely determined by who God himself is and what he himself does in the exercise of his free and sovereign grace.

However, the emphasis on God’s free and sovereign grace does not exclude the Medium through which this grace has come into operation. The Mediator of God’s grace is Jesus Christ and his completed work of salvation through his death and his resurrection. The ground of justification or salvation is only the self-sacrificial love and costly grace of God that is expressed by Christ’s death on the cross. God’s grace is never cheap grace, distributed to people without a price. God’s grace is costly grace, offered to people at the payment of the most costly price, namely, the life of his own son, Jesus Christ. Thus, justification by God’s grace means that justification is completely free for man - it cost man absolutely nothing and it cannot be earned or bought. In contrast, justification by Christ’s redemption means that justification was very costly for God – it cost God the highest price: the life of his Son!

The death of Jesus Christ on the cross uniquely enhances the gracious character of God’s act of justification. God’s mercy and grace (his love) does not overrule or cancel God’s righteousness and holiness, but rather fulfils the demands of God’s righteousness and holiness. Because he himself paid the price, he is able to exercise his mercy and grace (his love) towards unholy and unrighteous people without setting aside his holiness and righteousness!

3:24b-25a

Question 3. What is the effect of justification (salvation)?

Notes.

The effect of the righteousness which Christ brings about is that

- he redeems unrighteous people
- propitiates the righteous (just) anger of God (thus bringing peace)³
- and reconciles lost man to God⁴.

² The false teaching that everybody is saved on the ground of his own “faith” (for example, Hinduism).

³ Makes atonement, propitiates for sin.

⁴ Reconciles the sinner

**(1) The effect of justification
is to redeem unrighteous people (Romans 3:24b).**

Redemption came by Jesus Christ only. “Redemption” (Greek: apolutrōsis) means the buying back of a slave or a captive, making him free by the payment of a ransom. The ransom (Greek: lutron) is the price to set a slave free. The ransom is nothing less than the life of Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ gave his life as a voluntary self-sacrifice (John 10:18; 1 Peter 1:18-19) “in the place of” and “for the benefit of many” (Mark 10:45; John 10:11; 2 Corinthians 5:21). The ransom is paid, not to Satan, but to God the Father (Romans 3:24-26). By his death and resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ himself has become and since then is “the righteousness and holiness and redemption (the buying back)” of every Christian (1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 2:4-7).

God’s grace provided Jesus Christ as the redemption of sinners. Christ ransomed, that is, liberated believers from the slavery or bondage to sin by paying the price of dying on the cross. Christ is not simply the One who procured redemption, but rather the embodiment of redemption: he did not pay money as a ransom, but became the ransom by giving his life (himself) as a living sacrifice! His body became the sacrifice of atonement. What Christ accomplished cannot be separated from his Person. The redemption of people enslaved by sin cannot be separated from the Redeemer, from the One who paid the ransom price to redeem them. That is why it is impossible to redeem people without a Redeemer (cf. Isaiah 43:10b-11)! Jesus Christ is the Redeemer, the Mediator of redemption. Whenever a person believes in Jesus Christ, he is effectively redeemed, that is, liberated from the slavery or bondage to sin.⁵

**(2) The effect of justification
is to propitiate God’s holy and righteous anger against sin (Romans 3:25a).**

God’s grace presented Jesus Christ openly (Greek: protithēmi “by his blood” (his substitute death on the cross) as “a sacrifice of atonement” (Greek: hilastérion). “Propitiation” means that:

- God’s holy and righteous anger (indignation) against sin has been appeased (satisfied, calmed)
- God’s wrath and punishment has been turned away
- sins have been taken away.

Propitiation (of sin) reconciles God’s righteousness with God’s mercy.

The term “by his blood” does not teach that there is some kind of magic power in the substance of blood. The “blood” is a symbol for “life” (Leviticus 17:11), which he willingly shed by his death on the cross. Thus “the shedding of blood” is the symbol of the sacrifice of atonement through which all the sins of believers are forgiven (Hebrews 9:22) and they are perfectly purified (1 John 1:7).

A sacrifice of atonement (Greek: hilastérion) that would meet God’s demand for condemning and punishing sins must be brought. The requirements for a sacrifice of atonement would have to be the following:

- The sacrifice of atonement must be a human being, because the blood of an animal cannot make atonement for sins (Hebrews 10:3-4).
- The sacrifice of atonement must be a sinless human being, because a sinner would need atonement himself (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15; 7:26-27).
- The sacrifice of atonement must be willing to die, because otherwise he would be a victim (John 10:17-18; Matthew 16:53).
- The sacrifice of atonement must be God’s choice, otherwise it would not be God’s work (Acts 2:23; 1 Peter 1:20), but human work. The sacrifice of atonement is the sacrifice that satisfies God’s holy and righteous anger (indignation) against sin and removes sin itself. By his death and resurrection from the dead Jesus Christ himself became the One who turned aside God’s wrath and took away the sins of believers.

The term “God the Father openly presented” (Greek: protithēmi) Christ as a means of atonement may mean that:

- *from all eternity* God planned, purposed or designed Christ to be the Redeemer (Saviour) through his sacrifice of atonement (Ephesians 1:9,11; 1 Peter 1:18-20). “This man (Jesus) was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge” (Acts 2:23a).
- *or within the history of this world* God the Father publicly displayed or set forth Christ for himself as the sacrifice of atonement (Acts 2:23b). “You with the help of wicked men put him to death by nailing him to the cross” (Acts 2:23b).

The intention is the same, namely that God the Father is himself the One who provided redemption, planning it in eternity and working it out in history. It is a perversion of truth to say that God had to be won over by Christ’s intervention, because God actually planned, purposed, designed in eternity that Christ should be that sacrifice of atonement in history. God does not need to be persuaded and does not need to do something good (show mercy) by doing something bad (not punishing sin). He shows mercy to the sinner, because he has already punished sin. God’s righteousness (justice) and God’s mercy are completely and perfectly reconciled with each other on the cross! Because God is holy and righteous, he must punish sin. And because God is also merciful and loving, he himself provided the means of punishing sin and saving people.

⁵ The power, guilt, impurity, contamination and presence of sin.

Thus, Romans 3:25a is best translated as follows: “By the shedding of blood God presented Jesus Christ as a sacrifice of atonement that is effective through faith”. God planned (purposed, designed) in eternity Christ to become the sacrifice of atonement (the means to propitiate his holy and righteous anger against sin) and by the death of Christ on the cross in human history that propitiation only becomes effective when people begin to believe in Jesus Christ.

3:25b-26

Question 4. What is the purpose of justification (salvation)?

Notes.

The purpose of justification is to demonstrate God’s complete righteousness. It is to show God’s perfect character. In verse 26, the righteousness of God means God’s inherent justice or righteousness that cannot be violated by anything and is proved and maintained by the justification of sinners.

(1) The purpose of justification

is to demonstrate God’s perfect righteousness *before* the death of Jesus Christ.

During the Old Testament times people could have argued that God was “unjust” (unrighteous), because he let all nations go their own way (Acts 14:16) and he overlooked their ignorance with regard to God and God’s will (Acts 17:30). In the Old Testament period God showed his forbearance (patience) by passing by the sins that occurred. He did not punish people immediately and he did not punish them according to what their wickedness and ignorance deserved. And he justified believers like Abraham and David without punishing their sins (Genesis 15:6; Psalm 32:1-2).

However, God’s forbearance during the Old Testament period may not be interpreted as indifference to sin. His suspension of punishment may not be interpreted as forgiveness of sin! “Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Hebrews 9:22)!

(2) The purpose of justification

is to demonstrate God’s perfect righteousness *after* the death of Jesus Christ.

At the first coming of Jesus Christ he died on the cross and shed his blood. He gave his life as a ransom “for many” (Mark 10:45). He laid down his life “for his sheep” (John 10:11). His death was the punishment for the sins of his people.

By finally providing a ransom and a sacrifice of atonement in Jesus Christ:

- God punished the sins of all people who are being justified by faith during the New Testament period
- and God punished the sins of his people during the Old Testament period!

The death of Jesus Christ on the cross thus not only had an effect towards the future, but also towards the past!

After the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, no one can ever say that God is “unjust (unrighteous)”! After the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, Satan can no longer accuse believers that their sins are not atoned for (Revelation 12:10-11)! The death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the ground or reason of justification of believers in both the Old Testament period and the New Testament period!

The death of Jesus Christ proves that God was completely “just (righteous)” when he left the sins that were committed by believers *before* the first coming of Jesus Christ unpunished. It also proves that God is still completely “just (righteous)” when he leaves the sins that are committed by believers *in the present time* unpunished! The merits of the ransom price or the sacrifice of atonement reaches *backwards* throughout all the ages to the creation of man and *forwards* throughout all the ages to the second coming of Christ! The resurrection of Christ proves that God has accepted the sacrifice of atonement of Jesus Christ! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the centre of God’s dealings with man in the history of this world! That is why throughout the New Testament the heart of the gospel is “Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected” (John 1:29; 10:17-18; 11:51-52; 12:31-32; Acts 2:23-24,36; 3:13-15,18; 4:10-12; 5:30-31; 7:52,55; 8:32; 10:39-43; 13:27-35; 26:22-23; 1 Corinthians 1:23-24; Revelation 12:11).

When God justifies believers, they are not justified on account of their (beautiful) character or good (religious) works. They are justified on account of what God *once-for-all time in history* did in and through Jesus Christ! They are also not justified by an act of God in which he sets the righteous demands of the law aside, just as some sovereign ruler on earth might do. They are justified by the completed work of salvation of Christ in their place, in which the righteous requirement (the law) of God for the condemnation (punishment) of all sins and for salvation (justification and sanctification) of believers has been perfectly met! **Only the cross of Jesus Christ remains the visible demonstration that the righteousness (justice) and holiness of God has been completely and perfectly reconciled with the mercy and grace (love) of God for the sinner.**

3:27-31

Question 5. What are the results of justification (salvation)?

Notes.

(1) The result of justification

is that believers are kept humble (boasting is excluded) (Romans 3:27-28).

“The law of faith” excludes all human boasting. Here the word “law” means “principle, system, method or order of things”. All boasting of moral people about their good works and of religious people about their religious works (of trying to keep the moral, ceremonial and civil laws)⁶ is excluded. Boasting is based on the law (principle) of pretended righteousness through works of the law (trying to keep the moral, ceremonial and civil law), but boasting is excluded by the law (principle) of true righteousness through faith in the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ.

Two things are contrasted, each excluding the other. The system (of the Jews) in which the law (meaning: the trying to keep the moral, ceremonial, civil and the added man-made laws) is the method of justification is excluded by the system (of the Bible) in which faith is the method of justification. Justification by works is based on what a person is and does, while justification by faith is based on what God is and does! Works of the law (meaning: the trying to keep the moral, ceremonial, civil and added man-made law) congratulates itself, while faith in Jesus Christ renounces itself. Works of the law (meaning: the trying to keep the moral, ceremonial, civil and added man-made laws) boasts about its own accomplishments, while faith glories in the accomplished work of salvation of Jesus Christ. The law (meaning: the principle) of faith therefore totally excludes the law (meaning: the principle) of works as a means of justification! Therefore verse 28 concludes: “We maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from observing the law (meaning: the keeping of the moral, ceremonial, civil and added man-made laws).” A person is justified only by faith in the completed work of salvation of Jesus Christ!

“Justification by faith” means that God graciously imputes (ascribes, reckons, credits) the righteousness of Jesus Christ to the account of the undeserving believer. It means: God declares the believer in Jesus Christ completely and perfectly righteous and regards and treats him from then on as completely and perfectly righteous in his eyes.

(2) The result of justification

is that it proves that the only God has only one way of salvation for people (one way of justifying people) (Romans 3:29-30).

Deuteronomy 6:4 proves that Jews believed that there is only one God. If there is only one God, then he must be the God of both the Jews and the non-Jews (Gentiles)! And if he is the God of all people, then there can only be one way in which he justifies people. That way is not by the works of the law, which people do, but by faith in what God had already accomplished!

He will justify the Jews “by faith” (Greek: ek pisteós) (1:17:4:16) and the Gentiles “through faith” (Greek: dia pisteós) (Romans 3:22,25. Galatians 2:16). There is no difference between these two terms, because Paul uses them both to say the same thing. The future tense does not refer to the final judgement day, but expresses that justification by faith is from now on the sure method of justification.

(3) The result of justification

is to confirm the law (Romans 3:31).

Some people regard Romans 3:31 as introducing chapter 4 and then the word “the law” refers to the whole Old Testament. However, Romans 3:31 naturally belongs to chapter 3 and the word “the law” refers to God’s law of commandment which demands obedience of all people (as Paul later teaches in Romans 7:7-13 and 13:8-10) (the moral laws).

In Romans 3:20, Paul said, “no human being will be justified by the works of the law (by trying to keep the moral, ceremonial and civil laws)”. In Romans 3:21 he said, “God’s righteousness has been manifested apart from law (meaning: the keeping of the moral, ceremonial and civil laws)”. In Romans 3:27 he said, “The law (meaning: principle or method) of the gospel is faith and not the works of the law (meaning: the keeping of the moral, ceremonial and civil laws).” And in Romans 3:28 he said, “A man is justified by faith apart from works of the law (meaning: the keeping of the moral, ceremonial and civil laws).”

The irresistible question is then, “What meaning does the law still have (that is, the moral laws, because the ceremonial and civil laws have been fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated)? Has the law (meaning: the moral laws), in the sense of God’s commandments which demands obedience of all people, been made useless?”

Paul emphatically answers “No!” Paul anticipated this question and answers it without further elaboration. Christians do not nullify “the law” (meaning: the moral laws) by their faith in Jesus Christ. They rather uphold the law (meaning: the moral laws). Paul’s complete argument about the function of the law (meaning: the moral laws) follows later in Romans 7:7-13 and 13:8-10.

⁶ For example, (1) confessing that there is only one God, (2) praying so many times a day, (3) fasting so many times, (4) giving so much money (5) making so many pilgrims journeys, (6) being circumcised, (7) wearing religious clothing (kipa, headscarf, burka, (8) eating “religious clean” food (kosher, halal, no pork).

STEP 4. APPLY.**APPLICATIONS**

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS TODAY?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from Romans 3:21-31.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from Romans 3:1-31.

- 3:21. Discover how the message of the Old Testament is also “justification by faith through the grace of God”.
- 3:22. Discover why the New Testament teaches that there is no longer a difference between Jews and Gentiles.
- 3:23. Think of all the areas where natural man falls short of God’s absolute perfect standard.
- 3:27. Consider how you can boast in Christ and his completed work of salvation.
- 3:28. Check whether you still rely on keeping particular laws in order to gain God’s approval.⁷
- 3:29. If the God of the Bible is the God of all people, how can you present him to people around you?
- 3:31. Distinguish very clearly between the function of faith and the function of the moral law (the Ten Commandments).

2. Examples of personal applications from Romans 3:1-31.

Romans 3:24 says that we are justified freely by God’s grace. I want to remember, that on the one hand, I am justified free from any cost that I can pay, but on the other hand, that I am justified at a very high price that God has paid. He gave his one and only Son as a ransom price and a sacrifice of atonement in my place. God’s grace is not cheap, but costly!

Romans 3:27 says that the method of faith in Christ excludes the method of works by man and therefore no one can boast in any way of his own accomplishments. 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 says that I may boast, but only in Christ, who became my righteousness, holiness and salvation (redemption)! I want to boast only in Jesus Christ and his completed salvation work for me.

STEP 5. PRAY.**RESPONSE**

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in Romans 3:21-31.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5**PRAYER** (8 minutes)**[INTERCESSION]
PRAY FOR OTHERS**

Continue to pray in groups of two’s or three’s. Pray with one another for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6**PREPARATION** (2 minutes)**[ASSIGNMENT]
FOR NEXT LESSON**

(*Group leader.* Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples, build the Church and preach the kingdom.
2. **Preach, teach or study** Romans 3:21-31 with another person or group of people.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time with God from half a chapter of **1 Kings 3, 11, 17 and 18** each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation.** (1) The nature of the Church: **1 Peter 2:5**. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. **Teaching.** Prepare the parable of “**the wedding banquet**” in Matthew 22:1-14 and the parable of “**the great banquet**” in Luke 14:15-24. Make use of the six guidelines for interpreting parables. Make use of the six guidelines for interpreting parables.
6. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. **Update your notebook** on preaching God’s kingdom. Include your notes on quiet time, your memorisation notes, your Bible study notes and this preparation.

⁷ For example, must you wear particular clothing (a suite, a hat, a burka, a headscarf)? Must you not eat certain food (pork)? Must you not drink certain drinks (coffee)? Must you keep particular times (sabbath)? Must you do particular ceremonial washings or be baptised in a particular way (immersion)? Must you celebrate certain festivals (Passover)? Must you give a certain amount of money (tithe)? Must you refrain from dancing and from honouring your ancestors or from certain passage rites in your life; etc.