

• Paul has explained why the gospel is needed

• Now, he explains what God has done

**The argument from Romans 3:21-31**

• The way of salvation and its consequences

**3:21-22a**

1. A new epoch

2. Clothed by righteousness

3. Righteousness is a gift

4. Without the law

5. But witnessed by the law

6. Through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ

We have now reached a turning point in the letter to the Romans. Romans 1:18–3:20 has shown why the gospel is needed. It is needed because the whole world is **guilty** before God. Now Paul's second main section<sup>□1</sup> goes on to show what God has done to send a way of salvation and a **gift** of righteousness to the world. First Paul makes a basic statement. One of the most encouraging words of the Bible is 'But'. *But now . . .* Salvation comes in as God's 'But'. Man cannot save himself. But . . . !

The argument from Romans 3:21 onwards unfolds like this. He makes a basic statement. *But now, without the law, a righteousness from God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.*<sup>22</sup> *It is the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to all who believe.* There are eight things involved in this, as we shall see. Then in Romans 3:22b he begins to develop this theme. He explains why everyone needs salvation<sup>□1</sup>, how it is entirely free<sup>□2</sup>, how it comes to us through what Jesus has done. This is described as redemption<sup>□3</sup>, propitiation<sup>□4</sup>, and as providing justification<sup>□5</sup>. This way of salvation has three consequences, he says. It excludes boasting<sup>□6</sup>, is appropriate for everyone<sup>□7</sup> and fulfils the law<sup>□8</sup>.

1. Jesus starts a new epoch in the history of the world. Paul says, 'But now . . . ' He means 'In this stage of history . . . ', 'Now that Jesus has come . . . '.

2. Salvation is a matter of being clothed or covered by a righteousness that is not ours.

3. This righteousness comes entirely from God. God's righteousness here is his righteousness actually being given to us. To begin with, God's righteousness is given to us as a covering. It is the opposite of our own righteousness<sup>□1</sup>. It is Christ's obedience being reckoned as ours. Christ's obedience is 'put to our account'. This is the first step in our being a Christian. When we take Jesus as our Saviour, we are given a righteousness that comes entirely from God.

4. This righteousness comes 'without the law'. Salvation is not a matter of keeping the law of Moses. There are many aspects to the law of Moses but the way of salvation does not depend on any of them.

5. Although we are not saved by the Mosaic law, the law and all the other Scriptures witness and prophesy what God would do through Jesus.

6. The sixth truth in Romans 3:21–22a is that salvation comes to us 'through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ'. The Greek phrase here may be translated by 'the faith of Jesus Christ' or by 'the faithfulness of Jesus Christ'. The word 'faith' may mean 'faith' or 'faithfulness'. The same word has both meanings and often includes both ideas at the same time. It is hard to express in English. We could say 'through the faith-and-faithfulness of Jesus Christ'. Jesus is clearly presented in the New Testament as a man of faith, one who depended on his Father and upon the Old

□1 3:21-4:25

□1 3:22b-23  
 □2 3:24a  
 □3 3:24  
 □4 3:25  
 □5 3:26  
 □6 3:27-28  
 □7 3:29-30  
 □8 3:31

□1 see  
 Philippians 3:9

• *Our faith is faith in Jesus' faith*

Testament Scriptures. Our sins are cleansed by Jesus' blood; our failures in life are covered by Jesus' obedience; our weakness in faith is covered in that our faith is anchored to Jesus' perfect faith. Jesus was totally believing, totally faith-full. Paul says, 'I live by the faith of Christ'<sup>1</sup>. Few things take the believer totally out of himself, out of his self-concern, out of his every doubt and fear, as does his knowledge that the faith of Jesus was and is at work on his behalf. Our faith is faith in Jesus' faith. Our faith may be small and defective. Jesus' faith is all-embracing. If our small faith looks to his great faith, how can he fail?

<sup>1</sup> Galatians 2:20

7. *We have to believe*

7. Salvation is received by faith. God's righteousness comes 'to all who believe'. Jesus believes first but then we have to believe.

8. *Salvation is designed for everyone*

8. Salvation is designed for everyone in the human race. 'But now . . . a righteousness from God has been manifested . . . the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to all who believe.' God calls upon everyone to believe. Everyone who comes will be received. No one will be sent away. 'Look unto me', says God, 'and be saved, all the ends of the earth'<sup>1</sup>. 'The one who comes to me I will never cast out'<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 45:22  
<sup>2</sup> John 6:37

**Salvation must be received by faith**

This is the one thing that is required if we are to know salvation: we must receive it by faith. It is 'everyone who believes' who experiences eternal life<sup>1</sup>. 'Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned'<sup>2</sup>. 'He who believes in me will never be thirsty'<sup>3</sup>. 'My Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life'<sup>4</sup>. 'He who believes has everlasting life'<sup>5</sup>. Faith saves us. It links us to Jesus. It is nothing in itself. Jesus is everything. It is not that faith saves. Jesus saves! Our faith is just our reaching out to take hold of what Jesus has. Our faith is simply our saying to Jesus, 'Thank you, Lord, I'm so glad to take you as my Saviour.' When we are in any kind of trouble we do not scrutinize our faith; we look to our Saviour! It is not some frame of mind that we are in. It is simply that Jesus is real to us.

<sup>1</sup> John 3:14  
<sup>2</sup> John 5:24  
<sup>3</sup> John 6:35  
<sup>4</sup> John 6:40  
<sup>5</sup> John 6:47

• *Faith links us to Jesus*

• *An example – the Philippian jailer*

When the Philippian jailer came to realize he needed salvation and asked what to do to be saved, Paul had only one thing to say: 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.'



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)* books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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