

- *Development and expansion*

### 1. Salvation in Jesus is available for everyone

- *No fundamental differences between the different types of people in the human race in relation to our need for the gospel*

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

- *Our acceptance with God is **always** because of the righteousness of Jesus*

- *It starts now!*

- *Instantaneous*

- *Acquitted – a closed issue*

- *'Justification' takes place outside of us, in the heart of God*

It is at this point that we plunge into one of the most exciting parts of Romans. What Paul does from this point is develop and expand what he has said in 3:21–22a.

1. **First of all he develops the point that salvation in Jesus is available for everyone.** He has said, 'But now . . . a righteousness from God has been manifested . . . to **all** who believe.' Now he develops this word 'all'. The reason why this salvation is for everyone is because everyone needs it. There are no fundamental differences between the different types of people in the human race. The gospel is for **all** who believe, *for there is no difference.*

Of course there are differences among men and women in many ways. But in the things that really matter Paul says, 'there is no difference'. He is not saying there are no differences at all. He is saying there is no difference in the availability of the gospel. It is needed by everyone, <sup>23</sup>*for all have sinned and lack the glory of God.* We are one in sin and there is one Saviour for all of us. 'There is no difference' between us in sin but 'there is no difference' between us in the way of salvation. The truth is: all have sinned. He states a fact ('for all have sinned . . .') and then points to an underlying deficiency (' . . . and lack the glory of God'). Glory is the outshining of holiness. When humankind was created by God they were created with 'glory'. Men and women were made in the image of God. We were God-like in character. Then something went wrong. In Jesus this 'glory of God' comes back to us, but that is not Paul's point here. His point here is that the entire human race have sinned in actual fact and are badly in need of the 'righteousness of God' that Paul is writing about.

2. **Next he expands the point that salvation is a matter of being clothed or covered by a righteousness that is not ours.** There is only one way of being 'righteous' before God. It has to be a matter of a **gift** of righteousness. Now he goes on: <sup>24</sup>*They are justified, as a gift, by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.* What does it mean to be 'justified'? It means to be covered with a righteousness that is not one's own but which belongs to Jesus. Our condemnation as sinners is reversed by a pronouncement that we are righteous. Talk about 'justification' is using the picture-language of a law court. God is being pictured as a judge and king. God's wrath is against all sin. Our acceptance with God is **always** because of the righteousness of Jesus. It is taken for granted that we are **never** righteous enough to stand before God in our own righteousness. Through Jesus we can stand before God righteous in his sight, right now! Notice Paul says we are 'justified', covered with Christ's righteousness, now! It is not 'and we shall be justified . . .'. No, it starts now! As soon as we believe in Jesus Christ, we are the other side of judgement day! We have been through judgement day. God has already pronounced us 'Not guilty'. Though in ourselves we were guilty, God pronounces us 'Not guilty'. We are released from condemnation and guilt. We are innocent, pure, clean, righteous in God's eyes as if we had been as obedient as Jesus. Justification never alters in a child of God. When we believe in Jesus, immediately the righteousness of Jesus is reckoned as being ours. It is instantaneous. It takes place instantly in the courts of heaven. I do not have to fear judgement day, because (with reference to my eternal salvation) it is a past event. I have gone through it. The issue is closed. The Judge of all the universe tells me I am acquitted.

'Justification' is not something that takes place inside our hearts. It is something that takes place outside of us, in the heart of God. It is a decision taken about us, not a work done in us. This is why it does not matter at this point how we feel or how obedient we are. Our righteousness does not help justification. Our sinfulness does not hinder justification. 'Justification' is when the righteousness of Jesus is credited to us. It is a righteousness that comes from outside of us altogether.

*(a) Justified means 'declared righteous'*

The word 'justify' means 'to declare righteous'. There are four ways of showing this. (a) To 'justify' is the opposite of 'to condemn'. Romans 8:33, 34 says, 'It is God who justifies. Who shall condemn?' Justification is the opposite of condemnation. What does 'condemnation' mean? Does it mean 'make sinful'? No, when you 'condemn' someone, you are not making him wicked, you are declaring him wicked in some way or other. 'Justification' is not 'making' someone righteous; it is declaring that person righteous.

*(b) A declaration – example 1*

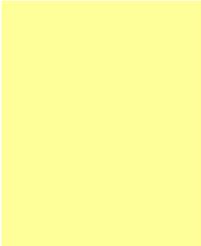
(b) Another way of showing the same point is to consider the phrase 'justifying God'. In Luke 7:29 we read that the people 'justified God' (a literal translation). Does this mean that they made God righteous? No, it means that they 'acknowledged' or 'declared' that God is righteous. 'Justification' is a declaration.

*(c) A declaration – example 2*

(c) The same thing becomes clear when we consider the phrase 'justifying oneself'. In Luke 10:29 we read of a man who asked Jesus a question about the greatest commandment. Jesus said, 'Love the Lord . . . and love your neighbour'. Then we read, 'But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"' Consider the phrase 'wanting to justify himself'. Does it mean that he was wrong but wanted to 'make' himself right? No! It means he was wanting to present himself as a righteous person. He was wanting to 'declare' himself righteous.

*(d) A reckoning – the basis of deep and solid assurance*

(d) Then another way of showing that the word 'justify' does not mean 'to make righteous' but 'declare righteous' is to consider the equivalent expressions that are used. To be justified is to be 'reckoned' righteous<sup>1</sup>. When you 'reckon' someone as righteous, you do not 'make' him righteous but you treat him that way, you count upon his being that way. It is not something you make him to be; it is something you declare him to be. This is all vitally important. You will never have any deep and solid assurance and joy unless you get hold of this.



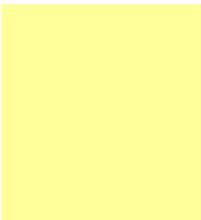
<sup>1</sup> 4:4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 23

*• An act of great generosity*

God's justifying us is an act of great generosity. Romans 3:24 says: 'They are justified, **as a gift, by his grace** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' Grace is God's totally undeserved kindness, his spontaneous love. It is the opposite of deserving something. It is the opposite of having worked for something.

*• Is this gospel really as wonderful as this? Yes it is.*

It is 'daring' to believe this. You and I are being asked to believe that by faith in Jesus we are so clothed with the righteousness of Jesus that it is as if we were Jesus himself. No matter what I may be in myself I stand before God as righteous as Jesus is righteous. I am living on the righteousness of Jesus. This clothing will never wear out. I have been given it for ever. Is this gospel really as wonderful as this? Yes it is. We stand before God only by the righteousness of Jesus. Trust in Jesus and his righteousness is yours.



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