

Righteousness Through Faith  
Romans 3:21-26

In Romans 1-3, Paul has given us an in-depth introduction to the reality of sin. This lengthy introduction has led us to look for and long for some good news. The good news that Paul has is beyond good. It's amazing, compelling, life-changing.

Last week, we spent time in a section where Paul made it clear that every aspect of our being has been affected by sin. The theological term is **total depravity**. Not that people are as bad as they can possibly be but the depravity, the effects of sin touch the totality of our being.

**3:20** "Therefore" introduces a conclusion. (You may have a Bible translation that says, "For.")

*No one will be declared righteous.* That sounds so bleak. No one.

That's the problem that needs to be solved.

That's the problem that God has solved for us.

We need to find a way to be righteous in the sight of a holy God, but we can't because we are sinners.

**3:21** *But now.*

One of the greatest phrases in the NT is but now. Look for it.

I wish **But Now** occurred in bold, all caps so you can't miss it.

Paul uses this phrase just a few times in the book of Romans and it is rich.

Some of the most powerful words in all of Scripture appear to be so ordinary and so mundane that you might completely underestimate the importance of these words. You were this but now you are that.

*There is a way for you as a sinner to be made right with God and that way comes from God.*

Justification is how God solves our sin problem.

**To be justified by God is to be declared righteous by God.**

To be clear: God does not declare guilty people to be innocent.

That would be like looking the other way. Ignore the sin.

It's not at the point of judgment that God intervenes. It's at the point of sentencing.

That's very different. To declare the guilty to be innocent would violate the justice of God.

God is able to look at the sinner and declare him or her to be righteous, not because they have been cleared of their sin but because they have been redeemed; penalty paid for.

In this way, God can be both – Just and the one who justifies.

God's justice is satisfied. Sin is recognized as sin. There is a declaration of guilt. There is a payment of the penalty. There is a recognition of the payment. The guilty are redeemed and declared to be righteous now that they are IN CHRIST.

The wonder of the cross is that in the very same moment, it satisfies both the justice of God and the love of God. The cross shows us that God is both the Judge – who keeps people accountable to the perfect standard of God AND God is the Justifier – who declares the guilty to be redeemed and righteous in the sight of God.

### **Home Group Discussion Questions:**

1. What's the difference between having the devil as your spiritual enemy and having sin as your spiritual problem?
2. Practice the Bible study skill of observation with Romans 3:21. Observe as many things as you can.
3. What is the significance of the phrase, "but now"?
4. What is the meaning of the word justification? How is a Christian justified? What does it matter?
5. What is the remedy for sin?
6. Since I have been justified, does it matter how I live?