

Study 4 – The epistle to the Romans by Neville Clark, 2016.

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Reading: Romans Ch 3

Man's complete failure to attain unto righteousness

Here we are in Ch 3, and you will recall, from what we have mentioned in the last couple of classes, that this chapter forms, at least part of the way through, the climax to the first major section the apostle has begun here, that is, man's complete failure to attain unto righteousness. You will see on the slide there, from Ch 1:18, all the way through to Ch 3:20, we have this section. Paul has explained to the ecclesias at Rome that he was the Apostle of the gospel of God, that he had come to tell them that God had initiated a scheme by which man could be justified and saved from the consequences of death, that is the consequences of sin which would bring death. It also pointed out that need related to both Jew and Gentile; both Jews and Gentiles, equally, had failed to attain to the righteousness of God.

The Gentile have failed to achieve righteousness

Ch 1, proved from history, that the Gentiles had failed to do so, in fact, quite the reverse, because in Ch 1:18, it tells us that all the Gentiles had succeeded in attaining, was the wrath of God, because, of course, they refused to acknowledge their creator, they worshiped the creation, rather than the Creator, buried themselves in debauchery, and invoked upon them, only the wrath of God.

The Jews have failed to achieve righteousness

When we came to Ch 2, we found, in fact, that things were no different in the Jewish world. Despite having the law of Moses, they had ignored God, they had presumed upon the Law, they thought that they would be saved simply because they were children of Abraham. In fact, they thought that the Law of Moses was an endorsement of God's acceptance of them, rather than a tool to bring them to God. You might recall, that verse in Ch 2:17, that they "rested in the law," they wore the Law as a badge of office; they didn't read it, really, they didn't think about it, really, it was simply a token, they believed of God's acceptance of them. It was nothing of the sort, and therefore they broke the Law, they changed the Law, and they became in that regard no better than the Gentiles. This was an extremely serious flaw in the Jewish economy, you see, not only had they failed to attain unto righteousness, but they had done so from a position of enlightenment, they ought to have known better. They knew the character of God in a way the Gentiles didn't, they had received a specific revelation in Ch 2, in contrast to the general revelation given to the Gentiles in Ch 1, and therefore you might say they were doubly culpable for their sins. As a consequence of that, by the time you get to Ch 3, all the world is equally condemned. Ch 1 condemned the Gentiles, Ch 2 has condemned the Jews, so the Apostle is able to say in Ch 3:9, "What then," he says, "are we better than they, that is, 'are Jews any better than Gentiles?'" "No, in no wise because they have proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." That is exactly where he gets to, you see?

Enlightened Gentiles

But before we get to Ch 3, and v 9, there is an issue. We've got the conclusion, if you like, of the historical analysis of Jews and Gentiles from Chs 1 and 2, we've got the conclusion in Ch 3:9. What do you make of Ch 3:1-8? What's going on in Ch 3:1-8? Let me tell you, just before the end of Ch 2, as the Apostle is describing the failure of the Jews, he says something that makes the blood of every Jew boil. He points out in Ch 2, that even though Jew and Gentile had equally failed to attain God's righteousness, there were in the world some Gentiles who were living the principles of the Law of Moses better than the Jews. You read for example in Ch 2:14-15 of a group of Gentiles who had become enlightened in the things of the Truth, these are Gentile converts to the Truth, the principles of the Truth becoming in the words of v 15 of Ch 2, "written upon their hearts," something that had never happened to the Jews in 1500 years of law-keeping, and these Gentiles exhibited the principles of Godliness better than the Jews. So the Apostle concludes in Ch 2:26, "Therefore, if the uncircumcision," that is if the Gentiles, "keep the righteousness of the Law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?" What does that mean? "If the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the Law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?" The Gentiles are better Jews than the Jews. Isn't that what it is saying? Isn't that exactly what it is saying? I am speaking about Gentiles who come to the Truth, they are better Jews than the Jews. What was the problem with the Jews? End of v 29 of Ch 2, "they sought the praise of men rather than the praise of God." They wore the law as a front-let between their eyes. They never opened it, it never made any impression on their characters

whatsoever, it was something to be bragged about, Ch 2:17, it was something to be boasted about, it was never, as far as the Jews were concerned, something that should affect your life, whereas those Gentiles he spoke of, they deliberately and consciously sought to please God.

Wow! You could almost see the Jewish jaw drop as Paul expounded that at the end of Ch 2, they'd be speechless, wouldn't they? utterly speechless, that he has commended the Gentiles in their Law, ahead of them, after one and a half thousand years. Well, they might have been speechless, but they weren't speechless for long, because right on the end of Ch 2 you've got the first eight verses of Ch 3 and this is how Ch 3 looks. We've considered the failure of the Gentile world in Ch 1, the failure of the Jewish world in Ch 2, when you come to Ch 3 we are going to talk all about the failure of all humanity, but before we get there, vv 1-8, you are going to see a list of Jewish questions, so desperate I might say, that these questions border on blasphemy, but these are the Jewish objections to Paul's tirade of Romans Ch 2.

The universal wickedness of man

Ch 3:9-18, the universal wickedness of man. Paul in these verses is going to complete his analysis and he's going to quote 6 passages of Scripture, Jewish Scripture to show that the Jews are, in fact, no better than the Gentiles from their own Bibles.

Vv 19-20 of Ch 3, the True purpose of the Law, for the Law was never ever intended to give life, that's what vv 19-20 say of Ch 3. The Jew forever misunderstood the purpose of the Law.

And then from Ch 3:21 to the end of the Chapter, in fact begins the next great section of the book of Romans. Ch 3:21, that section in fact ends at the end of Ch 5, now of course, we are only going to deal with the portion of Ch 3 this evening, but it is a new section, describing how God's righteousness has been revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. The point of the section is, God's righteousness is revealed in Christ outside the Law, therefore, salvation in Christ would be outside the Law. So the chapter is all about understanding the Jewish condition, where the Jews fitted in the purpose of God; where the Law fitted in the life of the Jews and then superimposed on top of that, the relevance of the Lord Jesus Christ to both Jew and Gentile, that's Romans Ch 3.

The Jews objections to the enlightened Gentiles

Well what did the Jews say? What's their issue in the first eight verses? Now before I read these first eight verses with you, what I have done here is I have summarized the questions, in my own words, summarized the four questions the Jews asked Paul. This is the four Jewish objections to his analysis in Ch 2, and the questions are, in v 1,3,5, 7 and 8. The fourth question is all of vv 7 and 8 apart from the very last line of v 8. What are the questions saying?

Q 1. Well, Paul, if God has adopted the Gentiles and discarded the Jews, what benefit is there in being a Jew? There's the first question.

The 2nd question,

Q 2. If Israel has failed, does that mean that God's purpose with the nation of Israel has also failed?

And then v 5.

Q 3. If man's unrighteousness elevates God's righteousness, isn't God unrighteous to judge man's unrighteousness? Now what's that saying? because that is a very desperate question. If my sin by contrast elevates God's righteousness, aren't I the greatest advertisement that God's ever got in the world? Why would he then judge me? Why should he judge me? And the fourth question in vv 7-8 is exactly the same as the 3rd question except that it is put from man's point of view. You see the 3rd question, If man's unrighteousness elevates God's righteousness, is God unrighteous to judge man, the 4th question is in vv 7-8, If man's unrighteousness elevates God's righteousness, shouldn't man do evil that good might come. Shouldn't man just pursue evil so that he could increase the grace of God that was shed forth abroad in the earth? In fact, Q 3 and 4 are identical, one from God's point of view Q 3 and the 4th Q from man's point of view.

Now what you are going to find in these first eight verses is that the Apostle gives almost one line answers to each of these questions, and you might look at the answers and say that they are not really very satisfying answers; the reason for that is that he elaborates on each of these answers later on in the book of Romans. And so he gives what might amount, in v 2, to a three line answer to the first question, but in fact he answers it more fully in Ch 9. The 2nd question, much more fully in Ch 11, and the 3rd and 4th questions which you will appreciate are basically the same Question, that's the story of Romans Ch 6. So the detail comes later, but for now, he's got very simple answers and I imagine, to be frank with you, if you got asked these questions by somebody who was testing the credentials of the Christadelphians you wouldn't be moved, honestly, to give much more than one line answers. These are disingenuous questions. As I said before, bordering on blasphemy.

Now one other thing I should just mention before we begin, don't forget when the Apostle writes this epistle to The Romans, he's not addressing any particular problem in Rome. These were not questions that had arisen from the Roman ecclesia. These are questions that the Apostle anticipates that the ecclesia will raise after they read the conclusions of Romans Ch 2. Well, how did Paul know? How did he know that the ecclesia would raise these questions? Well, because these were Jewish questions, these were typical Jewish questions. He's heard all this before, you see, the Apostle Paul cut his teeth in the ecclesia at Antioch. Antioch in Syria was the third largest city in the Roman Empire. It was an extremely powerful city. Any Jew born in the city of Antioch automatically got Roman citizenship, and in his time there the Apostle met every argument that the Jews could ever level. That's where these answers have come from, and therefore, he knew exactly what the Jews in Rome would think of his explanation in Ch 2.

What advantage then has the Jew

Well, Ch 3:1, "What advantage then," he says, "has the Jew, or what profit is there of circumcision?" Well, this is the question, if it is only being a Jew inwardly that counts, Ch 2:29, if it is circumcision of the heart that matters so much, what value is there, in ever having been a Jew, and he answers that in v 2. "Much," he says, "every way, chiefly because that unto the Jews were committed the oracles of God," the word "oracle" there means 'voice,' or 'word.' You might have expected Paul to have said None at all, no advantage at all in being a Jew, because merely being a literal child of Abraham won't save you, but in fact, he says, that there are many privileges. "Chiefly," he says, You want to know the chief privilege? The Bible. You've got the oracles of God. The Greek word 'lógion,' lógos = 'word.' You have the voice of God he says. Listen to this from Psalm 147:19-20. "God showed his word to Jacob and his statutes to Israel, he has not dealt so with any other nation." Being a Jew, he says, brought you into the orbit of the truth, that immediately changed everything about how you thought about life, including your whole reason for living. He never ever did that for the Gentiles. What's the benefit of being a Jew? What a silly question! V 3, Question Number 2.

"Well what if some did not believe?" That is what if some Jews didn't believe, "shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" Now here's the first change for you to make in v 3, where it says here "the faith of God," what does that mean? The answer is it means "the faithfulness" of God. What's he saying? What if some Jews don't believe God, does their unbelief nullify God's purpose with the rest of the nation? Would God break his promise with the rest of the nation for the sake of a few Jews? Here's the answer in v 4, "God forbid," or 'let it not be,' or 'by no means.' The word 'God' actually isn't in the original, 'by no means.' If you want the NEV translation, 'don't be ridiculous,' "yea, let God be true and every man a liar as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in they sayings and mightest overcome when thou art judged." What's that saying? Well, the last half from v 4, is in fact, a quotation from Psalm 51:4. Psalm 51 was written by David as a confession after the sin with Bathsheba. Now think about that then, God promised David that he would have a seed in 2 Sam 7. Subsequent to that, in 2 Sam 11, David committed a terrible sin with Bathsheba, adultery with her, lying, cheating, killing her husband, any number of sins he commits, four chapters after the promises to David. Question: Did David's unfaithfulness in 2 Sam 11 nullify the promises of God in 2 Sam 7? Certainly not, God still honoured his promise and the chosen seed came through Bathsheba and the point is, God's faithfulness does not depend on man. That's what David writes in his own Psalm. You know, when Paul elaborates this subsequently in Rom 9 and Rom 11, he says in Rom 9:27 that God never said that he would save every Jew. Rom 9:27 says that "a remnant" would be saved, God never expected every Jew to believe him anyway. It was never going to be the complete salvation of every Jew that had ever lived, saving the nation does not imply saving every individual, you see? God's faithfulness does not depend on the faithfulness of man.

Is God unrighteous in taking vengeance?

V 5. Q number 3. But "if our righteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say, is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance," and do you see the brackets there, "I speak as a man?" He's embarrassed to even write the question. This is such a stupid question he is embarrassed even to write it, but he writes it because he knows the Jews are going to raise it, my paraphrase as you can see, 'if man's unrighteousness elevates God's righteousness, is God unrighteous to judge man's un-righteousness?' Since man's unfaithfulness doesn't upset God's plan, that's the point of Psa 51:4, since man's unfaithfulness doesn't upset God's plan, in fact only serves to emphasise God's faithfulness, why should God punish man at all? "Surely" then, as I said before, "surely," in v 5, the wicked are God's greatest advertisement, "I speak as a man," he says, and here is the answer, "let it not be," 'by no means,' "for then how shall God judge the world," now what does that answer mean? There is Paul's, if you lie, one-line answer, think about the logic of v 6. If the wicked are to be commended for elevating God's righteousness, by contrast, then the wicked are really more beneficial to God than the righteous, aren't they? In which case, God should judge the righteous more harshly than he judges the wicked, because the wicked, in this analysis, are really more righteous than

the righteous. We have just made good, evil and evil, good on that basis, how can God possibly judge the world, you see? That's why he says that. You just turn everything over.. he says, 'This is a stupid question, how then could God ever judge the world, you've just made good, evil and evil, good.'

Should the Jew sin that grace may abound?

Then v 7, well, same question in reverse. "If the truth of God has more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why am I yet also judged a sinner and not rather, as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm we say, Let us do evil that good may come." This is as I say, the same question as v 5 except now from man's point of view, v 5 suggests that as you saw that God shouldn't judge man's unrighteousness. V 7 now suggests that man should pursue unrighteousness, so the argument is simple, God is seen at his best when he forgives sin. 'If I tell a lie' says Paul 'it could be said that God gains greater glory if he forgives me than if he condemns me.' Now you might look at that, brothers and sisters, and say, 'this is blasphemous to think like this, this is an utterly ridiculous argument, what kind of person would ever think it?' Well, look at the brackets in v 8, "as we be slanderously reported and as some affirm that we say." That is exactly what the Jews accused Paul of teaching, and how did the Jew arrive at that conclusion? Well, because Paul taught justification by faith and not by works, and so you see, to the disgruntled Jew, that meant that you could do what you liked because good works were now of no value to God. Well, it hardly deserves an answer, but it gets one, at the end of v 8, at the very last line of v 8, what does that mean, "Whose condemnation is just?" 'You deserve to die for that,' he says, 'You deserve to die for that.' The truth was, that Paul taught justification by faith and not justification by works, but that your faith had to be demonstrated by works, it was not as though you could do no works at all, you just couldn't do the works of the law, works were still important, but the question was now, 'What motivated your works, faith or law? Were they the works of the Truth from the heart? Or were they the mechanical obedience of legalism. What was the motivation behind the works you did? It was the whole question wasn't it, and the Jew railed against that. Now you might look at this brothers and sisters and you say, 'What's the problem here, really, in vv 1-8?' 'Why is the Jew asking these questions, because they are nonsensical questions, even to the Jew on a better day?' **Can you see the problem the Jew has got in these first eight verses? He just can't cope with the fact that there's a Gentile in Ch 2 that's more righteous than him. He thinks that whether a Jew is righteous or a Jew is unrighteous, God should still commend him because he is a Jew,** that's the real motivation behind these questions. How can it be anything else, the question is a stupid question, but that's the problem with the Jew you see. **He couldn't come at the possibility that a Gentile could upstage him before his own God.** And the Apostle concludes his analysis in v 9, "What then," he says, "are Jews better than Gentiles? No, in no wise because we have proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin," he says, and haven't we ever! **Ch 1, the failure of the Gentiles, Chs 2 and 3, up to this point, the failure of the Jews,** and the Jew, you know, the Jew had to swallow that and get accustomed to the fact that he stood condemned alongside the Gentiles he despised and history had proven it for both of them.

The Universal Wickedness of Man

Well, good oh, but **as far as history was concerned that wasn't going to be good enough for the Jew. You want to convince a Jew? 'Show me from the Bible,' he says, 'Don't give me this history, that's your interpretation, show me from the Bible,'** and that's now the burden of vv 10-18. **The Apostle, in these verses, these nine verses, is going to give the greatest consecutive chain of Scriptural references you will find in the Bible, six quotations, back to back, describing the universal wickedness of man.** Now there is no question as you read through vv 10-18 **that is exactly how the Jew thought of the Gentile. The problem is that these are quotations from the Old Testament, these are quotations from the Jewish Scriptures. If they applied to anyone, they applied to the Jew first.** So this is enormously powerful logic you see from the Apostle Paul. Five quotations from the Psalms, and one quotation from Isaiah, and what are they saying? Well, they are going to address character, speech, and conduct. We are going to quote Psalm 14, Psalm 5, Psalm 140, Psalm 10, Isaiah 59 and Psalm 36. You can see on the screen where each of those Psalms and Prophet occur in vv 10-18.

Psalm 14, describes the basic, endemic character, of mankind. Psalm 5, 140 and Psalm 10 all describe speech, because, of course, "out of the abundance the mouth speaks," the mouth is an enormously powerful index of the heart, so if you want to describe what mankind is really like, you can do no better, nine times out of ten, than quote what he says. Sin in conduct, vv 14-16 of Isaiah Ch 59, and then concluding in v 18 with the problem underpinning it all, Why is man like that? Ch 3:18, because there is "no fear of God before his eyes." "The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge," if there is no fear of God, everything goes down hill you see? This is why Jew and Gentile have a problem.

Now I'm not going to look at any of these quotations in detail, except to draw them to your attention.

Basically, what we are saying is that every line from v 10 through v 18 is a quotation from the Old Testament,

back-to-back, one quotation after another, but I will make some observations for you that will allow you to pull these quotations apart. What is the Apostle Paul trying to prove in these quotations? Well **he is trying to prove the statement in the last line of v 9, Jews and Gentiles are all under sin and he proves it in v 12. "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable,** so the issue of v 9 is what he is addressing in the next nine verses, and you've got it right there directly in the middle of v 12. "All," in v 9, "All are gone out of the way" in v 12, but look at the emphasis. Vv 10,11 and 12 are **all quoting Psa 13:1-3. Let me read you those verses and you will see it immediately, get out your coloured pencil. "As it is written, there is none righteous, not one, they are all gone out of the way, together become unprofitable, none that does good, not one."** You see that? All the way through those verses. "None righteous, not one," "none that understands" v 11, "none that seeks God," "none does good," "not one," so to a man Jew and Gentile are hopelessly astray from anything approaching the righteousness of God, naturally speaking. So there's the summary of all humanity.

Here are the symptoms. Vv 13-14, "Their throat is an open sepulchre," "their tongues use deceit." "The poison of asps is in their lips," "whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness," four references to how people speak, you see, in vv 13-14. Quoting Psa 5, Psa 140, Psa 10, because, as I say, 'the mouth is the index of the heart,' and that disposition translates into a way of life so now look at vv 15-17, "their feet swift to shed blood," "destruction and misery are in their ways," "and the way of peace have they not known," there's the lifestyle. So you've got the problem in vv 10,11 and 12, you've got the index of that problem in vv 13 and 14, you've got the lifestyle in vv 15,16 and 17, and you've got the bottom-line cause in v 18, they don't fear God. "There is no fear of God before their eyes," because man's natural perception is fundamentally flawed, you see? And six quotations back-to-back prove that, as I say, all from Jewish Scriptures.

But you must understand that you've got to read these quotations together. You can't for example pull vv 10 and 11 apart from the rest of these verses, they are all being used for the same purpose to prove that Jews and Gentiles, v 9, are all under sin. Now I say that, because I have heard, for example, v 10 applied to the Lord Jesus Christ. What would you think of that? "There's none righteous, no not one," including the Lord Jesus Christ, and because the verse is unilateral in its explanation of righteousness, it must include the Lord. Well, how would you answer that? Well, the first obvious answer would be, if "none righteous no not one" proves that Christ is not righteous, then I would say that v 23 that says "all of sinned" proves that Christ has sinned. Not only that, if we say that v 10 applies to the Lord Jesus Christ, you have to say that vv 11-12 do as well. You have to say that vv 11-12 do as well, because they are consecutive verses of the same Psalm, and therefore you've got to say, that not only is Christ not righteous in v 10, but that he doesn't understand in v 11, and he doesn't seek God in v 11, he's gone out of the way, he's become unprofitable, he doesn't do good. Well I'd say we've gone a little far wouldn't you? Now let's be clear, it is certainly true to say that of himself, intrinsically, there was no good in the son of God, that's true. All his goodness came from God, Psalm 16:2 says, however, it is not true to apply these Psalms to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is presented in this chapter as the solution to man's problem. When you come down to v 22. Vv 10, 11, 12 and so forth are the cause of man's problem, they are the description of man's problem, and whilst Christ did not have any intrinsic goodness, there is no question he did exhibit the righteousness of God. If that were not true, he would need his own Messiah, wouldn't he. He would need his own Messiah, he'd be in the same situation as the rest of us.

The heart of man contrasted with the righteousness of God

Well, you know, if that's not enough, in these verses, of Paul using Jewish Scripture to describe man's temperament of which the Jew was a part, everyone of those six quotations in the context of that quotation, has a contrast, and the contrast is between the heart of man and the righteousness of God, and the point is, the heart of man is nothing like the righteousness of God. So for example, the first few verses of our section, vv 10,11,12 quotes **Psa 14. Psa 14:1 says that "the fool has said in his heart There is no God." Psa 14:5 says that "God is in the generation of the righteous," so you see the heart of man contrasted with the righteousness of God. The point is, this is the gulf that exists between God and man.** The next one, Psa 5 is quoted here. Psa 5:9, "Man's inward part is wickedness." Psa 5:8 "lead me in Thy righteousness." You see, "the heart of man" contrasted with "the righteousness of God," and it is the same all the way through those quotations, and all mankind is the same, that's the point, be they Jew or Gentile. So you see what the Apostle has done here, by the time you get to the end of v 18, even if the Jew wouldn't tolerate his analysis of history, the Jew could not resist his analysis of Scripture. History, from our point of view clearly proves that Jews and Gentiles have failed, but not only does history prove it in the case of the Jew, so does Scripture, Jewish Scripture.

The Jew no better than the Gentiles

And here's the Jew, therefore, by the time we get to v 19, completely demolished isn't he? He's completely

demolished, having found, really, that he is no better than the Gentiles at all, in fact, in some ways he's worse, because he is clinging now by his finger nails to the last vestige of Jewish identity in the Law, Ch 2:17 says, "He rests in the Law." He thought the Law differentiated him as a matter of credit by God. This was the preeminent symbol, you see, of his national identity. 'Well,' he is thinking, 'What use is the Law? Where does the Law fit into Jewish social life?' V 19. "Now we know," says the Apostle, "that whatsoever things the Law saith it saith them who are under the Law that every mouth may be stopped and that all the world might become guilty before God. Therefore, by the deeds of the Law shall no flesh be justified in God's sight, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin." 'That's the purpose' the Apostle says, 'that's the purpose of the Law of Moses. Don't you see Jews, he says, the Law could never save you, it was never intended to save you.' God never gave it in the hope that mankind could keep it. He gave it that they might see that they couldn't keep it that they might appreciate the gulf that existed between Him and them, and that, therefore, they might come to God another way. 'Do you see that?' He says, 'can you understand Jews that's the real purpose of the Law. You used it as a credential, well you misused it therefore. Even if you had tried to keep it you would have found very quickly that you could never have done so, but what the Law would have done for you is expose your sin in places that you never knew sin existed. 'Perhaps when you were born thinking that you were nestled up against the right hand side of God you would have as your years of maturity went by realised that the gulf was greater and greater between you and your creator, and that's what the Law could teach you. And a thinking Jew who realised he clearly couldn't keep the Law would immediately cast about for another means of reconciliation to God. Well, that's the end of it, by the end of v 20. He's demolished the Jews, he's leveled the whole of humanity, there's nothing more he can say, there's nothing more any of us can say, is there? The Jews have failed, the Gentiles have failed, we all equally need the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Atonement

That brings us, by v 21, to the commencement of the next major section in the book of Romans, obviously it is a section break in this chapter, but not just in this chapter, Ch 3:21 all the way through to Ch 5:21 is the next enormous section in Romans, and this is the section on the atonement, that is, on the method by which God will bind man back to his side through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The righteousness of God revealed in Christ. It was revealed in the Gospel in Ch 1, in a message, and now it is revealed in a man in Ch 3 from v 21, and the point is, in this context, and it is revealed outside of the Law of Moses; the Law could only point forward to Christ. It could teach you that you needed Christ, it could not replace the Lord Jesus Christ. Now as I say, this commences from v 21 now, Paul's exposition on the atonement. In his book on Romans, Bro John Carter says that Ch 3:21-31, this last section, combined with Ch 5:12-21, the second half of Ch 5, are the two most important sections on the atonement in all of Scripture; the two most important sections on the atonement in all of Scripture, and of course, that's true. The language from v 21 onward is technical, it is a little bit complicated. So what I am going to do with you, is step through these verses and explain simply what this language is basically saying, between vv 21-26. When we get to the end of v 26 I am going to put up a paraphrase in, let's call it, "my language," of what these verses are saying and I think you will see that the message is really not that difficult, the subject of the atonement is really not that difficult. It is made difficult, because often it is forced to have to combat error, and as soon as you combat error, particularly if it is complex error, the answers become complex and the subject balloons. A simple and a correct understanding of the atonement is really not that complicated at all.

All are "under sin"

All right then, v 21. "But now," having dispensed with Jew and Gentile and their egotism, having dispensed with their histories, with Scripture, with the Law, "But now," he says, "the righteousness of God without the law is manifested being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets." "The righteousness of God without the Law," now he's not suggesting lawlessness here, the word "without," means 'outside,' the righteousness of God is going to have to come from outside the Law of Moses because only a man can manifest it. The Law could speak about it, the Law could point forward to that man, but only a man could demonstrate the righteousness of God, and he is talking about "manifesting," you see in v 21, that righteousness. Righteousness would never come by Law, but the Law and the Prophets did speak about the righteousness of God. I'm going to show you now the Law spoke about the righteousness of God negatively in the sense that it could only expose error in man and could never solve it. The prophets spoke about the righteousness of God positively. Here's a couple of examples, here's the prophets, Isa 54:17, "No weapon that is formed against thee Israel shall prosper. Against every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of Yahweh and their righteousness is of me, saith Yahweh," so there's the prophets witnessing to the righteousness of God, you see? Isa 54 would be one example. Jer 33, "A king shall come, a branch of David, Yahweh our righteousness," Jer 23 and 33 actually. What about the Law? If Isa 54 positively witnesses to the righteousness of God, here is the Law of Moses negatively

witnessing to it. Look at this. The sin offering covered “sins of ignorance,” in Lev Ch 4. Rashness, hastiness, in Lev Ch 5. The Law however, was merciless against murder, presumptuous sin, adultery, blasphemy; death sentence! Death sentence! Death, death. It couldn't solve the problem. It certainly took you out of the way, it certainly couldn't forgive you or give you any hope of forgiveness, you commit the greatest sins of human kind, the law would kill you for it. All the law would help you with by way of offering you sacrificial atonement was on the paltry sins, frankly, of mankind. Everything serious was out of bounds for the Law to assist you. Therefore as I mentioned a moment ago, any thinking Jew would have looked beyond the Law for a solution to his problems. So the prophets testified positively of the righteousness of God, the Law, negatively, by absence of the righteousness of God, you see, but nevertheless, both witnessed of the coming righteousness of God. V 22, “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference.” The point is, that whilst the Law and the Prophets witnessed to these things, Christ manifested God's righteousness, and the first observation on this verse is, that this now answers the problem of v 9. In v 9, we've got Jews and Gentiles “all under sin.” Look at v 22, “The righteous of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe,” because v 23, “all have sinned,” so here's the answer in v 22 to the problem of v 9 or the problem of v 23, “the righteousness of God has come to all,” be they Jew or Gentile, because they are “all under sin.” And when he says at the end of v 22 “because there is no difference,” he means because there's no difference between Jew and Gentile, you see? This is the solution that the Law could never ever provide.

The faithfulness of Jesus Christ

But what does the verse mean, brothers and sisters, when it says, “The righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ?” If you read that quickly, you'd probably just read it, even if you read it correctly, you would probably read it to mean “faith in Jesus Christ,” but it doesn't say ‘faith in,’ it says “faith of,” and Lexicons I have consulted say it ought to be “faith of” Jesus, well, what is the faith of Jesus Christ? Well, literally, it means ‘the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.’ The fact that he lived a sinless life and perfectly reflected the Father's character, the fact that he was consistent, here's the faithfulness of Jesus Christ which was able to manifest the righteousness of God. But let me tell you, it would be a mistake to limit this verse to talk just of what Christ did. If we have the “faith of” Jesus Christ, of course, well the word “faith” means ‘belief.’ If we have the faith of Jesus Christ, it means we believe the same things that Jesus Christ believed. Well what did Jesus Christ believe? I'm speaking particularly about the nature of man. What did Christ believe? Well, Matt 3:16 he said to John the Baptist “Suffer it to be so now for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” A sinless man ought to be baptised because he bears a body that's only worthy of death. ‘I know, John, you say that I should be baptising you, but do it, John, because I am made of the same stuff as you. Even though I have never yielded to it, my body is only rightly related to death, baptize me.’ “The son can do nothing of himself but what he sees the Father do,” you see, John 5? The Lord Jesus Christ is simply saying ‘I have no righteousness of my own, I'm copying my Dad, everything my Father does I copy. There's nothing good intrinsically about me, even though my life is perfect.’ “Oh righteous Father, the world has not known thee.” “Why callest thou me good,” Matt 9:17. “There is none good but one,” that is God. “Not my will but thine be done,” there's the faith, that's what Christ believed, brothers and sisters, about human nature, about human capacity, about human ability. There's the faith of Jesus Christ, you see? That there was nothing in man worth saving, that's what he believed, that every aspect of our lives has to be brought into submission to the character of God. There's the faith of Jesus Christ.

Righteousness apart from Law

So a righteousness apart from the Law has been revealed. The Law and the Prophets both speak of it, Christ exhibited it, it is called “the righteousness of God.” It's not, by the way, called the righteousness of man, it is called “the righteousness of God.” Our job, is to understand it, to accept it as the means of salvation. There's nothing in human nature worth saving, but every impulse of our being should be submitted to the will of God, and if we can understand that, our simple faith will progressively develop into a faith in action, based upon our commitment to those principles, God will forgive our sins and credit us with a righteousness we don't deserve. That is the simplicity of the atonement.

All have come short of the glory of God

He goes on in v 23 because he says, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” and this brings us now to the definition of sin, because the definition of sin, of course, is a little more expansive than what we might at first appreciate. The Jew thought that everything was defined by the Law of Moses. If the Law of Moses didn't address an issue, then that issue wasn't sin. That, of course, completely missed the point of the Law, if God had tried to list every possible sin in the Law of Moses, He'd still be writing the Law of Moses, wouldn't he? Here is the definition of ‘sin’ as far as Scripture is concerned. The Hebrew word for ‘sin’ is

translated mostly in Scripture as the English word 'sin,' but on one occasion it is not, and this now helps explain the meaning of the word 'sin.' In Judg 20:15 you have a reference to the children of Benjamin who were numbered at that time out of all of the cities 26,000 men that drew the sword. Among all this people, the record tells us, "there were 700 chosen men left-handed. Everyone could sling stones at a hair-breadth and not miss." Not miss what? Not miss the target, and that's the word 'sin,' that's the Hebrew word (חטא) Chata, for the word 'sin.' The point is, that to "sin" is to 'miss the mark.' Now what that means very simply is, you can sin by committing an act which is unlawful, you can also sin by omitting to do an act which is lawful. It doesn't really matter how you miss the bulls eye, whether you miss it by firing in the wrong direction, or you miss it by not firing at all, you've still missed the target, by 'commission' or 'omission,' you see? "Sin" simply means 'to miss the mark.' Well it tells is in v 23, that all have sinned and missed the mark, and the 'mark,' the target is the glory of God, in v 23, the righteous character of God.

They have "missed the mark"

Now these Benjamites, of course, the exhortation there is, the more they practiced, the better they got at hitting the mark. Practice is what will allow you to hit the mark over and over again, you'll never become a perfect marksman, but at least you can hit the mark, with practice, more than you can without practice. The moral application of that is Heb 5:14, "by reason of use we have our senses exercised, both to discern good and evil." If you practice not sinning, you get better at not sinning. That doesn't mean you'll ever become sinless, but it does mean you can reduce your worldliness. But, no matter how, as we say, no matter how good these Benjamites got, and no matter how good we get, we still draw up short, v 23 of the glory of God. What's the solution? Enter the Lord Jesus Christ, he's the solution to the problem, and when Christ's conception was announced to his father, Matt Ch 1, or his adopted father, at least, Matt Ch 1:21, he was told that Mary should bring forth a son, "thou shalt call his name Jesus because he shall save his people from their sins," this is how we are rescued. How? Well, because "a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and they will call his name Emmanuel which is, being interpreted, God with us." He's going to manifest the righteousness of God, you see? Jesus means 'God shall save.' He never 'missed the mark' and he could save others who did. There would be the solution to the problem. There was a solution, you see, that the Law could never ever offer, a Divine solution, calculated way back from Gen Ch 3, but necessarily the obvious solution to the problem. And of course, all of this is 'outside the Law of Moses,' v 24. "Being justified" then "freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Now let's read that carefully. "We are justified," that means we are 'credited righteousness' or 'forgiven,' "freely," that is 'without cost.' "By God's grace," his 'unmerited favour of us.' "Through the redemption," that is 'being recovered by paying a ransom price,' achieved by Christ.

Justified by faith

There are three points that emerge directly from v 24. 1. Look at the price that's been paid. The price that's been paid to ransom us from the grave in v 24 is, "the precious blood of Jesus Christ," 1 Pet 1:19. God put his own son to death, don't treat it lightly, there's the first point. 2. The price has already been paid. Think about that. That means there's nothing we can do to add any virtue to the sacrifice of Christ. There is nothing more we can add to that sacrifice. The debt has been paid in full and it can't have been paid any better. We are saved by the righteousness of God. We do not contribute to that. We can't offer anything, it is God that does the work. We are required, of course, to live a consistent life, but make no mistake, we can't add anything to the perfection of Christ's sacrifice.

Christ not a substitute

And finally, that does not of course mean that we do nothing. Christ is not a substitute for us, he is a representative, 1 Pet 2:21. He died as an example that we might follow in his steps, that means, walk in his footsteps, literally, follow, copy him, believe what he believed, live how he lived, display the faith of Christ, as a representative. And you know, that's the major difference, I'm going to say the major difference between Christadelphia and the rest of the Christian churches. I had a neighbour once. He was a new neighbour, because he built a house on a vacant block next to where we lived, back in Wellington, and he was a Pentecostal and he used to run of to church on Sundays and so forth, and so I thought 'Oh we've got a, well, you know, at least a common book, if not some common beliefs, so we went round to try and start up some discussion on the truth. We had one meeting, and I was careful, we talked about Daniel 2 and we went for like 30 minutes and I thought 'I won't blow it' because, we could have gone for 30 hours, 30 minutes, and we had a cup of coffee and I'm looking for 'round 2,' and he comes back to me and says he's not interested in 'round 2' and I said, 'Why not?' 'Oh, I looked you up on the internet.' 'Oh yeah? Well, you can find anything on the internet,' 'Yes, well you Christadelphians believe in 'repentance.' 'What?' I mean, sure we believe in repentance, and I'm starting to tick through quotes in my mind, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do, repent

and be baptised.' 'Godly sorrow worketh repentance,' you know, I'm starting to think of quotes and I said, 'Yes, I'm pretty solid on my need for repentance, yes we do believe that,' I said. 'I don't believe in repentance,' he says. I've never sort of thought about this before, he says, 'Christ is a substitute, there's nothing left to do. I would never become a Christadelphian because you talk about repentance.' So I said, 'Ok,' I'm still shell-shocked, 'so tell me a little more about what you do believe, because if you feel that there is no reason you should model your life on the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, or that there is anything that you have done that ought to be changed or reversed, or repented of, I'm at a bit of a loss to see how you are any kind of a disciple?' He says, 'Well, we worship God, God blesses us.' I said, 'How does God bless you?' 'financially.' 'Financially?' 'Yes.' Now it turns out this man was all about money. The Church was all about money, there was enormous discussion on how to make money and what size the collection was every week, his whole life revolved around the money that he could make. That's why he built a house on the block next door, it was an investment property so he could make money. The whole church revolved around that, because Christ has done it all for you and you can put your feet up, let Christ do the rest, and get about making money in this life. That was Pentecostalism. Amazing! But you know, the subject of the Atonement is really not that hard to understand. But if you go wrong, like he went wrong, your wrong doctrine can clearly effect your lifestyle. The minute Christ is a substitute you do not have to copy his example; well, that's the minute you walk out of salvation of course, but you can clearly appreciate how that's going to effect your lifestyle. If you don't have to copy Christ in any way, well, you can turn up here, for example on Sunday morning, tick the box, live the rest of your week making money, just like my neighbour did. But can you see, though, if that's all we did, then all we have done is turn the truth into simply a refined form of Judaism. We go through the motions of Divine service, there's no real change in heart, and we are really no different to the Jews of Rom Ch 2, and that is exactly the situation my neighbour was in, a legalist. The fact is, I dare say, the only reason he was baptised into Pentecostalism, was to tick that box, get eternal life insurance, and go about living his life exactly as he wished to. Hopeless. Well, v 25, "Christ, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare God's righteousness for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God." Now there's a fair mouthful in that verse, what's that saying? It says, "God has set Christ forth to be a propitiation." The word "propitiation" means 'a mercy seat.' The only other use of the word in the New Testament is in Heb 9:5 where it is translated 'mercy seat.' Now what was the 'mercy seat?' It is very simple, it was the lid of the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy Place, the wooden lid, upon which the Cherubim stood, that's the mercy seat. In Ex 25:22, God said to Israel, "there will I meet with you," the Shekinah glory, you see, of God, the visible presence of God hovered over the mercy seat. It was the meeting place between God and man. Every year on the day of Atonement the High Priest would, on behalf of that nation, meet with God, in the Most Holy Place when he sprinkled blood on the mercy seat to take away the sins of the Nation. So where it says here that Christ is a "propitiation," or a "mercy seat," it simply means that Christ is the meeting place between God and man. God it says, has "set forth" Christ to be in that capacity. The interesting thing, of course, is, that no one ever saw what the High Priest did on the day of Atonement in the Most Holy Place each year, because it was in the Most Holy Place, there were two curtains separating that from public view. When Christ was set forth, it was on a cross and in Jn Ch 12:32 he says "if I be lifted up I will draw all men unto me," it was in full public view that God set forth this mercy seat, and "it being the meeting place between God and man for the remission, or the forgiveness of sins that are past," that's sins committed under the first covenant; sins committed under the Law of Moses. What for? V 26, "To declare I say, at this time God's righteousness that God might be righteous and the 'righteousifier' or 'him that makes righteous' him that believeth in Jesus. V 26, "To declare God's righteousness in requiring atonement for sin, and that God might remain righteous even though he takes an unrighteous person and makes them righteous. I mean, that's as simple as it is. Now I'm just going to read this on the screen, if you want a copy, of course, you can take a copy off the screen later, but just read with me from v 21 through to v 26, you follow along, and I will just read this paraphrase.

The righteousness of God revealed

V 21, "But now, the righteousness of God, outside the Law of Moses is revealed, which is spoken of by the Law and the Prophets." Not hard? "Even the righteousness of God," v 22, "which came by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to all believers because there is no difference between Jew and Greek." Not hard? V 23, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the righteousness character of God." V 24 "but are made righteous without cost," that is, as a gift, "by God's favour through the price paid by Jesus Christ." V 25, "Whom God has put forward as a meeting place between God and man through faith in the atoning power of his blood to declare God's righteousness as the basis for the forgiveness of our past sins by God's patience." V 26, "This declares God's righteousness that God might remain righteousness and still attribute righteousness to him that believes in Jesus." That's Paul's crowning summary of the atonement in Rom 3, the atonement simply being the necessity of the Lord Jesus Christ to get mankind out of the mire into which he has fallen, that is to bind him back to God, save him from eternal death by the forgiveness of sin.

Salvation cannot be earned

And having said that, v 27 to the end is very simple. It is the conclusion of this section. V 27, "What is there to brag about here? Salvation hasn't been earned," he says, "all we've done is believe what God taught us and God's done the rest." "So," v 28, "we conclude therefore, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Righteousness" or 'forgiveness of sin' "comes by faith and not by Law." V 29, "Is God the God of the Jews only, is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also," he says. The Law, you see, was the only thing that differentiated Jew and Gentile, at least in the mind of the Jew. Remove the Law, and there is no difference at all. V 30, "there is only one God and therefore there's only one means of salvation." V 31, "Do we then make void the Law through faith?" Have we destroyed the Law? "By no means, in fact, we establish the Law," this elevates the Law, because the whole purpose of the Law was to teach man his need for salvation. The Law was never intended to save you. That's what vv 19-20 have said, you see? But you see what the Apostle has done, vv 21-24 What God did. Vv 25-26, How God did it. Vv 27-31, Implications, and there are three major implications that we have just read, 1. In v28, Justification comes by faith and not by Law. 2. In v 29, both Jew and Gentile can be saved, and 3. In v 31, The gospel of righteousness establishes the Law rather than contradicts it because it shows that man has got no righteousness of himself, which is exactly, in v 20, what the Law of Moses taught. And so there it is brothers and sisters. The Gentile world condemned by history, the Jewish world condemned by history, by Scripture, and by the Law of Moses, so God had to act and act he did. He revealed His righteousness in a son that all mankind, be they Jew or be they Gentile, may have faith in that, a lifestyle to match, that God may take an unrighteous man credit him with righteousness without compromising His own righteousness.