

# ROMANS

## Chapter 3

*God's Righteousness Upheld*

**hen what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? 2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3 What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? 4 By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged." 5 But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) 6 By no means! For then how could God judge the world? 7 But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? 8 And why not do evil that good may come?—as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.**

Luther: "In chapter 3 [Paul] throws them all together in a heap, and says that one is like the other: they are all sinners before God. Only, the Jews have had the word of God. Though not many have believed that word, this does not mean that the faith and truth of God are exhausted. He quotes incidentally a verse from Psalm 51[:4], that God remains justified in his words. Afterward he comes back to this again and proves also by Scripture that all men are sinners, and that by the works of the law nobody is justified, but that the law was given only that sin might be known. (TLSB)

"Then he begins to teach the right way by which men must be justified and saved. He says: They are all sinners making no boast of God; but they must be justified without merit [of their own] through faith in Christ, who has merited this for us by his blood, and has become for us a mercy-seat by God. God forgives all former sins to demonstrate that we are helped only by his righteousness, which he grants in faith, and which was revealed at that time through the gospel and was witnessed to beforehand by the law and the prophets. Thus the law is upheld by faith, though the works of the law are thereby put down, together with the boasting of them" (AE 35:373). (TLSB)

### **The Pivotal Role of Romans 3:1-8**

The chapter division at Rom 3:1 is disruptive. The thought progression of Romans 2 could easily have been extended through 3:2. The statements made in 2:17–29 to a Jewish person, as well as the statements about circumcision and the Law, lead directly into the self-directed questions which open what we call "chapter 3." On the other hand, the question-and-answer format which begins in 3:1 progresses through nine more questions in 3:2–9. This indicates a transition particularly in rhetorical style if not in content. In terms of content, the issues addressed here are substantial, both for the argument of Romans and for Christian theology as a whole. Campbell is justified in proposing that "in search for clues to the organization of the letter, the question-answer sections, especially 3:1–8, offer useful guidelines for discerning the structural centre out of which the entire letter is developed." (CC)

**3:1** *what advantage.* In other words, what was the point of Judaism if it did not earn salvation? (TLSB)

He is asking the question in order to evade the call to repentance that is contained in Paul's proclamation of God's exception-less wrath. (Franzmann)

**3:2** *to begin with.* Paul does not discuss the other advantages of being a Jew until 9:4–5. (CSB)

*entrusted.* The advantage of having the very words of God involves a duty. (CSB)

Paul deals patiently with question and takes it seriously. How very seriously he takes it appears later, when he devotes three whole chapters to the question of Israel's disobedience to the Gospel (Rom 9-11). (Franzmann)

**3:3** *faithfulness of God.* God is faithful to his promises and would punish Israel for its unbelief (v. 5; see 2Ti 2:13). (CSB)

Although Israel broke the covenant, God kept His promises. (TLSB)

**3:4** *By no means!* God will not break His promises. (TLSB)

*That you ... judged.* Frank confession of sin. God is right; we are sinners. (TLSB)

**3:5** *show the righteousness of God.* By contrast, in showing it up against the dark background of man's sin. (CSB)

Explaining v 4. God is righteous. We deserve punishment because we are sinners. (TLSB)

*a human way.* "Human" in the sense of its weakness and absurdity. (CSB)

Paul is showing the complaints behind the questions and is speaking rhetorically. (TLSB)

**3:6** ἐπεὶ πῶς κρινεῖ—The conjunction ἐπεὶ can have a temporal sense, "when, after" (BDAG, 1), or a causal one, "because, since" (BDAG, 2). Under the latter heading, there is sufficient evidence for its use to convey "for otherwise" (BDAG, 2; see also Rom 11:6, 22; 1 Cor 14:16; 15:29; Heb 10:2). Hultgren renders that sense well in this context as "if so." (CC)

*judge.* On judgment day. (CSB)

*the world.* All moral creatures (also in v. 19)—a more limited reference than in 1:20. (CSB)

**3:7–8** Though Paul is falsely accused of antinomianism, he includes himself as a sinner. God's faithfulness is greater than our sin (vv 3, 5). (TLSB)

Antinomianism = Because God has forgiven Christians, the Law no longer applies to them (Rm 6:14). There is no "third use" of the Law, which guides Christians in doing good works. Paul teaches that the Law still applies to all who commit sin. Because Christians are justified by grace, they do not live under the Law's condemnation. However, because Christians continue to sin, the Law still speaks to them and calls them to repent (Rm 6:1–2). (TLSB p. 1942)

**3:7** καὶ γὰρ—This is a contraction of καί and ἐγώ. "The word καί ... then is used to introduce the main cl[ause] of a cond[itional] cl[ause] and connotes a previously expressed circumstance." (CC)

**3:8** *some people*. Jews or Jewish Christians who thought that teaching justification by faith would lead to lawlessness. Charge will be refuted in ch 6. (TLSB)

*condemnation*. God knows the truth and condemns the false witness of these critics. (TLSB)

**3:1–8** Human sinfulness shows the radical difference between God’s holiness and humanity’s unrighteousness. God made covenants with His people, but we have broken our promises. How blessed we are that our unfaithfulness cannot nullify His faithfulness. He redeems us because He is gracious. • Loving Father, thank You for Your grace and faithfulness. Empower me by Your Spirit to be faithful to You. Amen. (TLSB)

*No One Is Righteous*

**9** What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, **10** as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; **11** no one understands; no one seeks for God. **12** All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” **13** “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” **14** “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” **15** “Their feet are swift to shed blood; **16** in their paths are ruin and misery, **17** and the way of peace they have not known.” **18** “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” **19** Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. **20** For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

**3:9** *Are we Jews any better off ?* Are Jews better than Gentiles in the sight of God? (CSB)

*all*. Nine times in four verses (vv. 9–12) Paul mentions the universality of sin (“all,” two times; “no one,” four times; “not even one,” two times; “together,” once). (CSB)

*under sin*. Under its power and condemnation. (CSB)

All people are guilty of sin and remain under its power; this is why we keep sinning. (TLSB)

**3:10–18** A collection of OT quotations that underscores Paul’s charge that both Jews and Gentiles are under the power of sin. Several factors explain why the citations are not always verbatim: 1. NT quotations sometimes gave the general sense and were not meant to be word-for-word. 2. Quotation marks were not used in Greek. 3. The quotations were often taken from the Greek translation (the Septuagint) of the Hebrew OT, because Greek readers were not familiar with the Hebrew Bible. 4. Sometimes the NT writer, in order to drive home his point, would purposely (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit) enlarge, abbreviate or adapt an OT passage or combine two or more passages. (CSB)

Six OT quotes demonstrate human sinfulness, summarized by v 10, “None is righteous.” “Through Adam’s fall is all corrupt, Nature and essence human” (FC Ep I 8). The cause of this unrepentant sin is that no one has faith, the “fear of God” (v 18). (TLSB)

### **The Old Testament Quotation in Romans 3:10**

There is not a righteous person, not even one [οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος οὐδὲ εἷς]. This opening salvo is most likely drawn from the first half of Eccl 7:20, where the LXX reads: “since there

is not a righteous person on the earth who will do good and will not sin” (ὅτι ἄνθρωπος οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος ἐν τῇ γῆ, ὃς ποιήσει ἀγαθὸν καὶ οὐχ ἁμαρτήσεται). On the one hand, there are significant changes. First, Paul omits the singular noun ἄνθρωπος, “person,” at the beginning, probably to fit the broader application of 3:9. Second, he does not include the latter half of the verse, which is certainly applicable to the point at hand. Finally, and most significantly, “on the earth” (ἐν τῇ γῆ) in Ecclesiastes is altered to read “not even one” (οὐδὲ εἷς). As a result some, including Cranfield and Moo, contend the citation is actually being drawn from Ps 14:1 (LXX 13:1), “there is not one doing kindness, there is not even so much as one” (οὐκ ἔστιν ποιῶν χρηστότητα, οὐκ ἔστιν ἕως ἐνός). This is plausible due to Paul’s use of Ps 14:2–3 in the following quote. But the ending, “even so much as one” (ἕως ἐνός), is not exact here either and, most importantly, Ps 14:1 lacks the key word present in Eccl 7:20, “righteous” (LXX: δίκαιος), which points ahead to Rom 3:20. As a result, the citation may be a conflation of both passages. But, if forced to choose, it is most appropriately regarded as the only NT quotation from Ecclesiastes. (CC)

**3:10** οὐκ ἔστιν—“There is not” expresses non-existence. This key expression is repeated five more times in 3:11–18 (twice in 3:11, twice in 3:12, and once in 3:18), each time quoted from the LXX translation of the Hebrew יָדָע. (CC)

**3:11** *understands*. About God and what is right. (CSB)

**3:13** *open grave*. Expressing the corruption of the heart. (CSB)

**3:14** ἀρᾶς καὶ πικρίας γέμει—In Greek, most verbs of being “full (of something)” take the genitive, as does γέμω, to “be full” (BDAG). Therefore while the forms of the feminine nouns ἄρα and πικρία *could* be accusative plural, instead ἀρᾶς and πικρίας are genitive singular: “of cursing” and “of bitterness.” (CC)

**3:15** ὀξεῖς ... ἐκχέαι—The adjective ὀξύς often means “sharp” (BDAG, 1), but it can also mean “quick, swift,” as here (BDAG, 2). The form is masculine nominative plural. The verb ἐκχέαι is an irregular (lacking -σ-) first aorist infinitive active of ἐκχέω, “to pour, to shed.” It functions exegetically, explaining the adjective ὀξύς. (CC)

**3:16** σύντριμμα καὶ ταλαιπωρία—These two nouns depict “destruction, ruin, fracture” and “distress, trouble, misery” (BDAG), respectively. (CC)

**3:18** *fear of God*. Awesome reverence for God; the source of all godliness. (CSB)

### **The Law Speaks – 3:19 (CC)**

As in 2:2, Paul introduces his conclusion in 3:19–20 with “and *we understand that* as much as the Law is saying, it is speaking to those within the Law” (3:19; see οἶδαμεν ... ὅτι also in 7:14; 8:22, 28). It is difficult to comprehend how Paul knows that what he proceeds to assert is “common ground between himself and the person addressed.” Rather, this rhetorical characteristic of the diatribe style seeks to persuade his hearers to agree with his assertion because he has now convinced them to accept this harsh indictment. (CC)

In 3:19 “Law” (νόμος) once again returns to the forefront of the discussion. Previously in Romans Paul used “Law” (νόμος) nineteen times, but only in 2:12–27. Now it reappears six more times in 3:19–21, and the interpretation of this critical section “really turns upon the meaning of ὁ νόμος [‘the Law’].” “Paul uses *nomos* [νόμος] most often and most basically of the Mosaic Law.” (CC)

**3:19** *law*. The OT (as in Jn 10:34; 15:25; 1Co 14:21). (CSB)

God's voice, recorded in the Law. (TLSB)

This verse contains the picture of a defendant in a court of law who given the opportunity to speak in his own defense, is speechless because of the weight of evidence that has been brought against him. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

*those who are under the law.* Jews. (CSB)

Those subject to the Law; in this case, the Jews. Scripture proved their guilt. (TLSB)

“Those who are under the law” refers to “both Jews and Greeks [that is, Gentiles]” (3:9), in other words, all mankind. All mankind is under the damning burden and curse of sin. Everyone is guilty in God's sight. God's Law does all the talking in condemning mankind's disobedience against him. Mankind has nothing to say in defense of our sin against God and his Law and must be silent before God, to whom we are subject (*hupodikos*, “accountable”). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*every mouth ... whole world.* Jews as well as Gentiles are guilty. (CSB)

While some proclaim innocence, the evidence of sinfulness is clear. (TLSB)

That the heathen are guilty before God and deserve punishment because of their glaring abominations is evident. But the Jew, whose vices were hidden by a certain outward righteousness or appearance of piety, are no better than the heathen. The Law, which they had in preference to the heathen serves to silence them also before God when He judges them and to make them appear worthy of punishment. (Stoekhardt)

*held accountable* – It amounts to this that every mouth is stopped, that the whole world, Jew and Gentiles, deserve punishment. (Stoekhardt)

### **An Adapted Psalm Corroborates – 3:20 (CC)**

In 3:20 Paul pronounces a verdict against the world and every person in it: “consequently, from works of the Law, every fleshly person will not be declared righteous before him, because through the Law [is] a recognition of sin.” Aside from 2:17–29, much of Paul's discussion thus far might have been affirmed by most Jewish hearers, though 3:1–8 illustrates how there may have been objections along the way. The truths of 3:10–18 would have to be grudgingly accepted since those words are drawn directly from their own Scriptures. Here the applicability to “both Jews and Greeks” (3:9) may also have been challenged. But Paul's summation in 3:20 introduces a thought which would have been “diametrically opposed to Judaic thinking on the Law.” (CC)

What is ultimately intended to come from the Law's speaking is a realization that is fully in line with what the psalmist David declared to God: “Before you every living being will not be declared righteous” (ַׁל־לְךָ יְהוָה לֹא־יִצְדָּקׁ, Ps 143:2; LXX 142:2). Ps 143:2 is then rendered literally by the LXX as οὐ δικαιοθήσεται ἐνώπιόν σου πᾶς ζῶν. Paul has been building his case all the way up to 3:20 to make this verdict stand. All are under God's “righteous decree” of death (δικαίωμα, 1:32). All are “storing up ... wrath in the day of wrath and of the revelation of the *righteous judgment* of God” (δικαιοκρισίας, 2:5).

**3:20** *will be justified.* Conclusion shows that statements of 2:7, 10, 13 were hypothetical. Works cannot earn salvation. (TLSB)

Here the purpose for God giving His Law is that it would show us our sin. The Law was never intended by God to serve as the basis for one to prove his own righteousness standing before God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

“By works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight.” Man cannot manipulate God or make God change the truth of his condemning Law, thus to favor one person over another or to distinguish one person over another. If this were possible, it would actually serve the opposite purpose of revealing how much the same we are in our sin before God, the only true judge before whom all mankind actually stands. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*through the law comes knowledge of sin.* The Law serves as a mirror. When we hear its commands, it clearly shows us that we have sinned and are guilty. (TLSB)

Psalm 130:3 “If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?”

Ecclesiastes 7:20 “There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.”

**3:9–20** While we are tempted to think that obedience to the Law can save, Paul shows the Law’s diagnosis: we are sinners incapable of saving ourselves (v 20). Only when we see this are we prepared for the Good News of what Christ has done for us. • Lord, I know that I am a sinner. Forgive me. Help me see Jesus and trust in Him alone. Amen. (TLSB)

### *The Righteousness of God Through Faith*

**21 But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. 29 Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, 30 since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.**

**3:21–5:21** Having shown that all (both Gentiles and Jews) are unrighteous (1:18–3:20), Paul now shows that God has provided a righteousness for mankind. (CSB)

**3:21-24** But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, . . . through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.” Drastically different from God’s Law, wherein all mankind is revealed to be the same in its sin, is God’s Gospel of the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, which we have through faith. This distinguishes us before God from unbelievers

because of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection (*apolutrōseōs*, "redemption"). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

### **Righteousness Revealed with *and* without the Law (3:21)**

The verb "is being revealed" (ἀποκαλύπτεται) in 1:17 emphasizes the present impact, which is also part of the meaning of the perfect tense verb πεφανέρωται in 3:21: "but now ... a righteousness of God has been revealed and *is now out in the open*" or "*is now well-known*." At the same time, as Romans 4 will make abundantly clear, Paul is not arguing for a "new" way to righteousness. This is corroborated by, and further informs, the interpretation of the second half of this verse. (CC)

Here in 3:21 he notes how this righteousness is "apart from the Law [νόμος]" and, at the same time, is "being testified to by the Law [νόμος] and the Prophets." There is a similar dual statement in 3:20 about what does not come "from works of the Law" (ἐξ ἔργων νόμου), namely, a declaration of righteousness for anyone (οὐ δικαιοθήσεται), as well as what does come through it, a proper recognition of sin. In 3:21 there is something which is separated from "the Law" (νόμος) as well as that to which "the Law" (νόμος) bears witness. (CC)

**3:21** *But now*. There are two possible meanings: (1) temporal—all of time is divided into two periods, and in the "now" period the righteousness from God has been made known; (2) logical—the contrast is between the righteousness gained by observing the law (which is impossible, v. 20) and the righteousness provided by God. (CSB)

Paul revealed our unrighteousness; now he reveals the righteousness of God, which is Christ Jesus. (TLSB)

These words are small but mighty! They introduce the transition between our total inability to keep the Law and the good news that grace is the sole basis for our righteousness before God. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

*apart from the law* – Jesus' sacrifice fulfills the OT Law. Paul now defines righteousness and the righteous community, functions formally held by the Torah in Israel. God's righteousness is not earned by our works. (TLSB)

The law does not speak in the Gospel. God demands nothing of man in the preaching of the Gospel but only promises, gives and presents, namely, the NT blessing of righteousness. (Stoeckhardt)

*righteousness of God through faith* – This righteousness of God, that counteracts sin, guilt and wrath, is truly not our own righteousness, not something good in us, but a righteousness that rests outside of us in God, in God's judgment, and so is as firm and immovable as God Himself. What God says, judges, decrees, is valid in time and in eternity. He whom God declares righteous is righteous, even though all the world and all devils condemn him, even though his own conscience pronounces him guilty and judges him. (Stoeckhardt)

**3:22–23** *There is no distinction*. A parenthetical thought: All who believe are "justified freely" (v. 24), not "all have sinned ... and are justified freely" (vv. 23–24). (CSB)

### **The Righteousness of God for All (3:22–24)**

The beginning of 3:22 stresses the “righteousness of God” (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ). The middle phrase, “through faith of/[in] Jesus Christ” (διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), emphasizes Jesus as the basis and/or object of faith. The next phrase, “into all those who believe” (εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας), either turns attention toward human believing or reinforces the previous phrase with an added emphasis that righteousness through faith is for all. The universal availability of this righteousness of God is, after all, “one of the most conspicuous motifs of the epistle.” This is evident by the manner in which “into all those who believe” (εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας) virtually replicates “for everyone who believes” (παντὶ τῷ πιστεύοντι) in 1:16. (CC)

The inclusion of Jews and Greeks is not explicit in 3:22, though it becomes a main focus in 3:27–31. Any presumed distinction is silenced by the final clause of 3:22, “you see, there is not a difference” (οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή). The point is not, of course, that everyone is the same. Numerous differences exist between people who are living apart from the righteousness of God from faith, as well as among those in Christ (see, e.g., 12:3–8; 14:2, 5). There are distinctions in gender, language, culture, station in life, gifts, and so forth. The predominant differentiation in Romans is between Jews and Gentiles. Paul only uses “difference” (διαστολή) two other times, but once is in 10:12, where he more fully expresses the thought: “for there is not a difference between Jew and Greek” (οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή Ἰουδαίου τε καὶ Ἑλληνοῦ). (CC)

**3:22 righteousness of God** – The righteousness bestowed by God. (Bauer)

The righteousness of God is God’s alone; man is taken up into it and set in it. (subjunctive genitive) It is a conjunction of judgment and grace which He enjoys and demonstrates by showing righteousness, by imparting it as His pardoning sentence. (Kittel)

Psalm 48:10 “Like your name, O God, your praise reaches to the ends of the earth; your right hand is filled with righteousness.”

Jeremiah 23:6 “In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.”

*through faith in Jesus Christ* – Paul uses forms of this expression often (Gal 2:16; Php 3:9; 1Tm 1:14; 2Tm 1:13; 3:15). Grammatically, the expression may speak of our faith, which trusts in Christ and His work. It may also indicate Christ’s faithfulness in completing the work of salvation. Both explanations teach true doctrine: Christ earned our salvation by His faithfulness and gives us the benefits of His work through the gift of faith. (TLSB)

But what is the relation of faith to righteousness? According to the apostle the righteousness which avails before God existed before it was revealed, before preaching and faith. The preaching of the Gospel, which reveals and offers this righteousness, renders possible and first awakens faith. Righteousness is received through faith. Faith is merely the medium of acceptance. (bag) Through faith we take the righteousness Christ prepared. (Stoekhardt)

This contains an objective genitive which has Jesus Christ as its object. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

*no distinction.* Between Jews and Gentiles (see 10:12). (CSB)

**3:23** *all...fall short* – Every human, aside from Christ. (TLSB)

Some may seem to come closer than others, but no one can live a holy life. “Scripture shouts everywhere that we are far away from the perfection that the Law requires” (Ap XIIB 45). (TLSB)

The persons spoken of are they that believe. Therefore, all who believe have, before they became believers, sinned and so fallen short of the glory of God. (Stoekhardt)

Isaiah 53:6 – “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”

Isaiah 64:6 – “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”

Romans 3:12 – “All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.”

1 John 1:8 – “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”

*glory of God.* What God intended man to be. The glory that man had before the fall (see Ge 1:26–28; Ps 8:5–6; cf. Eph 4:24; Col 3:10) the believer will again have through Christ (see Heb 2:5–9). (CSB)

Glory is a visible manifestation of the holiness of God. Glory emanates from His presence (Is. 6:3). Like the moon reflects the sun’s light, we are to reflect God’s “light.” In Romans 1:21-23 wicked humanity exchanged the glory of God the Creator for the glory of created things. This deadly exchange results in the perverse worship of “things.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

This glory of God, is not the future glorification of God, in which the believers will finally share, or the original image of God which man had. All who believe have sinned and are, therefore, without all glory, all honor, and all esteem before God, since all without exception become righteous in this way: that they in the knowledge of their sinfulness and complete unworthiness before lay hold of Jesus Christ in faith. (Stoekhardt)

### **The Basis for God’s Declaration of Righteousness (3:24–25)**

“Being declared righteous” occurs both “undeservedly” and “by his [God’s] grace” (3:24). “Undeservedly” (δωρεάν) is used as an adverb which modifies the action of the participle “being declared righteous” (δικαιούμενοι) and expresses *manner*. It could emphasize that the declaration comes “freely,” as the reference to “grace” will soon reinforce. But “undeservedly” makes better sense, especially in light of 3:22–23. The fact that “all sinned and are lacking the glory of God” (3:23) underscores that any righteous declaration on God’s part is completely undeserved. (CC)

**3:24** *justified*.† Paul uses this verb 22 times, mostly in 2:13–5:1; Gal 2–3. It is translated “justify” in all cases except two (2:13; 3:20, where it is translated “declared righteous”). The term

describes what happens when someone believes in Christ as his Savior: From the negative viewpoint, God declares the person to be not guilty; from the positive viewpoint, he declares him to be righteous. He cancels the guilt of the person's sin and credits righteousness to him. Paul emphasizes two points in this regard: 1. No one lives a perfectly good, holy, righteous life. On the contrary, "there is no one righteous" (v. 10), and "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (v. 23). "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his [God's] sight by observing the law" (v. 20). 2. But even though all are sinners and not sons, God declares everyone who puts his trust in Jesus not guilty but righteous. This legal declaration is valid because Christ died to pay the penalty for our sin and lived a life of perfect righteousness that can in turn be imputed to us. This is the central theme of Romans and is stated in the theme verse, 1:17 ("a righteousness from God"). Christ's righteousness (his obedience to God's law and his sacrificial death) is credited to believers as their own. Paul uses the word "credited" nine times in ch. 4 alone. (CSB)

Legal justice can recognize the fact that man is righteous; it cannot make him righteous. God makes man a gift of His acquittal, gives him, effectively, the status of righteousness, lets him stand and count as righteous in His eyes. The acquitting and restoring grace is lavish, generous, without reserve. It is in the last analysis wholly inexplicable, being hidden deep in the abysses of the love of God. But it is neither sentimental nor arbitrary, it does not drown sin in tears, neither does it simply ignore sin. The God of grace deals with sin effectually and at a fearful cost to Himself. (Franzmann)

Ephesians 2:8-9 "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast."

Grace cannot be earned; it must be given by God. (TLSB)

*grace as a gift.* † The central thought in justification is that, although man clearly and totally deserves to be declared guilty (vv. 9–19), God declares him righteous because of the redemption through Christ. This is stated in several ways here: (1) "freely" (as a gift, for nothing), (2) "by his grace," (3) "through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus" and (4) "through faith" (v. 25). (CSB)

*redemption.* A word taken from the slave market—the basic idea is that of obtaining release by payment of a ransom. Paul uses this word to refer to release from guilt, with its liability for judgment, and to deliverance from slavery to sin, because Christ in his death paid the ransom for us. (CSB)

Gk *apolytrosis*, the buying back of a slave or captive, to set the person free. Christ gave His life to set all people free when He died on the cross. "We receive the mercy promised in Him by faith and set it against God's wrath and judgment" (Ap IV 82). (TLSB)

**3:25-26** God distinguishes Christ Jesus as the righteous and just justifier, by the atoning sacrifice of his sin-free lifeblood on the cross. By faith in his atoning sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sin, we are in his righteousness and have been justified, distinguished. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

*propitiation by his blood.* The Greek for this phrase speaks of a sacrifice that satisfies the righteous wrath of God. Without this appeasement ("propitiation") all people are justly destined for eternal punishment. (CSB)

Gk *hilasterion*, in the LXX, the ark of the covenant's cover, where the high priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices. See note, Ex 25:17. As the propitiation covered the ark of the covenant, Christ's righteousness covers the sinner. He is the sacrifice for sin. (TLSB)

Propitiation – In the OT used in connection with sacrifice, when in some way blood covered sine and effected atonement. Jesus by His blood exercised propitiative function and effected atonement between God and men. Concordia Dictionary)

This word carries with it the image of the OT mercy seat and recalls the blood sacrifices of the old covenant (Lev. 17:11). The grace of God permitted for the life of the slain victim to be substituted for the life of the sinner. Christ is the one who pays for the guilt of sin and also performs the sacrifice. This is reflected in our hymnody: "himself the victim and himself the priest" (LSB – 637) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 13, Part 4)

Propitiation, in the original Hebrew "Kapporeth," is taken from the sacrificial ritual of Israel. Kapporeth was the name of the golden cover over the Ark of the Covenant, therefore, the mercy-seat. Thus Christ is compared to and appears as the Antitype of the OT mercy-seat. (Stoekhardt)

The atoning power and efficacy of the mercy-seat rested in the blood of a sacrificial animal with which it was sprinkled every year. The significance of the OT offering was the following: If an Israelite had sinned against a commandment of God, according to the precepts of the law he took an animal from his herd, without fault or blemish and brought it to the tabernacle, later to the temple. In the court of the sanctuary he laid his hand upon the animal's head. Thus he substituted the animal himself and symbolically transferred to it his sins and guilt (Lev. 16:21). Thereupon the Israelite killed the animal for offering. By his sin the Israelite had forfeited his life and merited death. However, in his stead the guiltless life of an animal was given into death and its bloodshed. The animal, to which the sins of the Israelite were imputed, atone for the punishment of the sinner. (Stoekhardt)

First then did the functioning priest take part in the sacrificial act. He took the blood of the animal and spread it on the horns of the altar of burnt-offering, or waved it to and fro on the side wall of the altar, or poured it out on the ground around the altar, thereby bringing it into the presence of God. For the altar was the place where God came together with His people (Ex. 29:42). The blood of the animal came between the sinner and the holy God and so covered or atoned for man's sin. The blood-offering, applied to the altar of God, covered the sins or the sinner before God, so that God no longer saw his sins, no longer regarded them, no longer reckoned them to his account. The blood served as atonement for sins, while in and with the blood the life, the soul, of the animal gushed forth, and thereby the punishment of the sins was atoned. Lev. 17:11: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." The blood of the animal did not in itself have the power to atone or the sins, but only inasmuch as it prophesied of the better Offering of the NT. The basic idea of the offering, therefore, was vicarious satisfaction. (Stoekhardt)

The significance of the offering is the foundation for the right understanding of the sprinkling of blood by the high priests upon the Ark of the Covenant on the great Day of Atonement. The sacrificial act of this day, culminating in the sprinkling of blood, was the OT highest and most

perfect act of atonement. On this day all the sins of Israel during the past year were atoned. Lev. 16:30: "For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord. (Stoeckhardt)

The essential characteristics of this great act of atonement are the following: The priest took a young bullock as sin-offering for himself and for the priesthood and two he-goats as sin-offering for the people and placed them before the Lord, before the door of the tabernacle, later before the door of the temple. Hereupon he slew the bullock of the sin-offering for himself and the priesthood. The he filled the pastil burners with coals from the altar of burnt-offering and his hands with holy frankincense; and carrying both into the holy of holies, he caused a cloud of smoke to arise by laying the frankincense upon the burning coals. Thus the mercy-seat over the Ark, the place of God's presence, was covered so that he could safely approach it. While the holy of holies became filled with smoke of the incense, the high priest returned to the court for the blood of the bullock. Re-entering the holy of holies for the second time, he sprinkled first the front side of the Ark's covering, then seven times on the ground before the Ark. By this act he atoned for his own sins and for those of the priesthood. The sprinkling upon the Ark served as atonement for the persons of the high priest and the priests, the sprinkling before the Ark as atonement and cleansing of the holy of holies, which became unclean through the sins of the priesthood. (Stoeckhardt)

After the atonement of the priesthood was completed, the high priest left the sanctuary for the second time, returned to the court, and there killed the ram, selected by lot as sin-offering for the congregation. With its blood he went into the holy of holies for the third time and sprinkled the blood in the same manner as before. The significance of the double sprinkling of blood was identical in both instances. The sins of the congregation and then the impurity of the holy of holies resulting from these sins were atoned. In similar ways, by means of blood, the holy place and the court, especially the altar of burnt-offering, were cleansed from all impurity of the children of Israel. And so the service which the congregation provided through the priesthood is and at the sanctuary was a divine, God-pleasing service. (Stoeckhardt)

The most characteristic thing at the offering of the Day of Atonement was that the blood of atonement was brought into the holy of holies and sprinkled upon the covering of the Ark or the mercy-seat. The vessels of the holy of holies formed the throne of the God of Israel. The Ark of the Covenant, wherein was concealed both tables of the law, was the base, the golden plate over the Ark the footstool of the throne. On this plate stood two golden cherubim's, whose wings spread over it. Between the cherubims, over their outstretched wings, moved the cloud, that is, the cloud of divine glory, in which Jehovah manifested His presence in the holy of holies over the Ark of the Covenant (Ex. 40:34; 25:22; Lev. 16:2). By applying the blood of the offering to the Kapporeth, the priest brought it into the immediate presence of God. Thus the blood of atonement was really and truly valid before God. However, between the tables of the law in the Ark and the holy God, enthroned over the cherubims, was the mercy-seat, sprinkled with blood. The mercy-seat, sprinkled with blood, covered the tables of the law, covered the transgressions of Israel before the eyes of God, so that God no longer saw and regarded them. The mercy-seat with its blood, however, changed God's wrath over sin into grace and good pleasure. Accordingly the thought of atonement and reconciliation found its strongest and most concrete expression in the offering of the Great Day of Atonement. (Stoeckhardt)

What happened to the second he-goat or the scapegoat was to symbolize through an outward act how God now considered all the sins and impurities of Israel of the past year. To this end the high priest placed both his hands upon the head of the live goat, confessed all the sins and transgression of Israel, thus putting them upon the head of the goat. Thereupon the goat was led far out into the wilderness and left there in order to show the people that they were completely and forever free from their sins. To be sure, the atonement occurred with the application of the blood of the first goat. But since it was physically impossible to use the dead goat, therefore, another goat had to take its place in order to symbolize to the people how they were released from their sins as a result of the atonement. In this respect both goats formed the one act of atonement. (Stoeckhardt)

Christ appears as the Antitype of the OT Kapporeth and the Counterpoint of the OT offering. For He is a “propitiation in His blood,” by virtue of His blood. In one person He is the Offering as well as the Priest and the Mercy-seat. Christ Jesus stepped into the sinner’s place and took upon Himself the guilt of the whole world. Men did not offer this substitution or themselves, for they continued and delighted in their sins. They desired no Redeemer, no offering for their sins. Unasked, of His own accord and out of free grace, God ordained and gave His Son to men as their Mediator and Atoner. God Christ’s a propitiation. The Lord put all our sins upon Him and imputed them to Him (Is. 53:6). God made Him to be sins for us who knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). And Christ of His free will took out sins upon Himself (Is. 53:4; 1 Peter 2:24). And thus He offered Himself for us. (Stoeckhardt)

He is at one and the same time Offering and Priest. He gave His life into death; He shed His own blood in the stead of sinful men, who were worthy of death. With His holy, precious blood He appeared before God Himself. He is our Mediator in the highest throne. He pleaded His blood before God and once and for all atoned for the sins and the guilt of the whole world. He turned God’s wrath into pleasure. Marked and covered with His own blood, He stands as the NT Kapporeth between sinful men, the transgressors, and the great holy God and covers all our sins, guilt, shame and weakness before God, so that He no longer reckons them to our account. Therefore, men are completely and forever free from their sins, rid of all their transgressions and impurities. That is what propitiation in His blood includes. (Stoeckhardt)

Christ is a “propitiation through faith.” His atonement is perfect and needs only to be accepted in faith. Faith it is that applies to itself, that claims for its own, Christ’s atonement and redemption and the righteousness which avails before God offered through it. The distressed sinner takes refuge in Christ through faith and there finds protection from God’s wrath and judgment. (Stoeckhardt)

The nearest object of faith is the Word. God set forth His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He made to be sin and the Atoner for sin, openly before the eyes of whole sinful world through the preaching of the Gospel. In the Gospel the crucified Christ is set forth before the eyes of men (Gal. 3:1). Sinners hear the Gospel of Christ, of His atonement and redemption and the righteousness which avails before God. They thus become righteous before God. (Stoeckhardt)

1 John 2:2 “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

1 John 4:10 “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

*blood...faith.* Saving faith looks to Jesus Christ in his sacrificial death for us. (CSB)

Faith does not earn anything; it receives God’s gift. (TLSB)

*divine forbearance* – Christ’s work shows that God both justly punishes sin and graciously forgives sinners. (TLSB)

*passed over former sins* – Patience with sinners. (TLSB)

God did not ignore sin. He delayed the punishment until Christ paid it. Some thoughtless modern theologians have likened Paul’s teaching on the atonement to child abuse because the Father sent the Son as a sacrifice. This assertion ignores Christ’s willingness to make full satisfaction for sins. Christ is true God “reconciling the world to Himself” (2Co 5:19). The Father sent the Son the way a patriotic father sends his son to war for the good of his nation. A father does not send a son cheerfully, but sincerely, anticipating sacrifice, victory, and reunion. (TLSB)

### **God’s Righteousness Ratified (3:25–26)**

The end of 3:25 reveals the driving theme of this section. It is not primarily centered on people, not even “all those who believe” (πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας, 3:22), but rather clearly focuses upon God’s “righteousness,” which is mentioned in 3:21, 22, 25, and 26. The “righteousness of God” (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ) has been revealed and is now out in the open (3:21). This “righteousness” comes through “faith of/[in] Jesus Christ” to all who believe (3:22). Yet these believers all sinned and are lacking the glory God bestowed upon them (3:23). How can such people be declared righteous freely (3:24) without God somehow being “unrighteous” (ἄδικος) for the opposite reason suggested in 3:5? Paul here explains. The redemption price was paid by Jesus (3:24) whom God publicly set forth as the sacrifice of atonement in his blood, which stands as “proof of his righteousness” (ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ, 3:25). By that phrase Paul asserts that the purpose and result of all this serves to demonstrate *God’s* righteousness. Paul reinforces and restates this when he returns to the thought in 3:26 with “toward the proof” (πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν). (CC)

**3:25b–26** The sins of God’s people, punished symbolically in the animal sacrifices of the OT period, would be totally punished in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. (CSB)

**3:26** *show his righteous* – God’s righteousness in Christ is still effective. (TLSB)

By His bloody offerings Christ satisfied God’s righteousness. Divine righteousness demanded punishment. And in Christ the sins of all men of all generations until the end of the world, are punished. The punishment of sin is death and damnation. (Stoekhardt)

It was an altogether free impulse of divine love, which we call grace, that moved God to redeem lost mankind. But surely since God planned and carried out the work of redemption and salvation, He did not deny His righteousness. He could not, for He would have denied Himself. He rather yielded completely to His righteousness and just wrath. That Christ, men’s substitute, who took men’s sins upon Himself, had to give His life and blood was a demonstration of divine righteousness. Where sin, there also punishment, even though the sin lay on Christ. (Stoekhardt)

Deuteronomy 32:4 “He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he”

### **Through Works or Faith? (3:27–28)**

“Then where is the boasting?” (ποῦ οὖν ἡ καύχησις;). The initial question of 3:27 ties most directly back to 2:17 and 2:23. There Paul depicted the “Jew” as relying on the Law and boasting in God (καυχᾶσθαι ἐν θεῷ, 2:17), and, then, boasting in the Law itself (ὅς ἐν νόμῳ καυχᾶσθαι, 2:23). Where now is “the boasting”? The divine passive “it was shut out” (ἐξεκλείσθη, 3:27) implies that it was excluded *by God*. The translation “shut out” communicates, as in baseball, that such Law-based boasting in God (2:17) leaves you with nothing. Paul does use “boasting” (καύχησις) positively when the ground for boasting is appropriate (see the textual note), but boasting “in the Law” (2:23) will get you absolutely nowhere before God. (CC)

**3:27-28** We are distinguished (passively) by faith. That is why we have nothing to boast of that would distinguish us (active). Christ Jesus fulfilled the Law of God for us (active). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 4)

**3:27** *then what...boasting* – By nature all men have a proud heart and the inclination to glory in themselves and in their own accomplishments. (Stoekhardt)

No one deserves salvation; all receive it by grace. (TLSB)

*what kind of law* – The principle of faith is an exclusive principle, intolerant of compromise. No compromise is possible between faith and works of law. We hear the echoes of the battle Paul once fought for the churches of Galatia (cf. Gal 2:16; 3:2) (Franzmann)

Or, principle. The Law does not save; it shows our need for God’s redemption, which is received through faith. (TLSB)

*law of faith*. John Chrysostom: “What is the ‘law of faith?’ It is, being saved by grace” (NPNF 1 11:379). (TLSB)

**3:28** *we* – Paul and fellow Christians. ( TLSB)

*by faith*.† When Luther translated this passage, he added the word “alone,” which, though not in the Greek, accurately reflects the meaning. An alternate translation might be “through faith,” as Paul generally employs two prepositions: *dia*, “through,” and *ek*, “as a result of ” e.g., 1:17; 3:22, 25 and several manuscripts at 3:28)—indicating that faith is not man’s contribution or decision, but a gift of God (cf. Eph 2:8–9). (CSB)

“Upon this article [justification] everything that we teach and practice depends ... we must be certain and not doubt this doctrine. Otherwise, all is lost” (SA II I 5). (TLSB)

*justified apart from* - khorece – To be separated from to without. Luther says it means by grace alone.

**3:29** οὐχὶ καὶ ἔθνῶν; ναὶ καὶ ἔθνῶν—The interrogative οὐχί, “is not ...?” already implies that Paul expects an affirmative answer. He then provides it explicitly with ναί, “yes, also of Gentiles.” The redundancy gives emphasis. (CC)

**3:30** εἴπερ εἷς ὁ θεός—The combination of εἰ and περ is used as a conjunction, “if indeed, if after all, since” (BDAG, s.v. εἰ, 6 l). Here there is no uncertainty regarding the assertion, so the translation “since” is preferred. Cranfield suggests “if, as is indeed true” and “seeing that.” Käsemann gives “then certainly.”<sup>41</sup> The declaration εἷς ὁ θεός alludes to the *Shema* (Deut 6:4).

περιτομὴν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως—In earlier passages Paul has already used both of the prepositions ἐκ and διὰ with πίστις, “faith.” Here the question is whether there is a distinction between ἐκ with περιτομήν, the “circumcised” person is declared righteous “*from* faith,” and διὰ with ἀκροβυστίαν, the “uncircumcised” person “*through* ... faith.” The use of the article τῆς with the second πίστεως points to an anaphoric use, “through the *same* faith.” This occurs when the first mention of a substantive, here the first πίστεως, lacks the article, but the second includes it in order to point “back to *the* substantive previously mentioned.” (CC)

*God is one God.* By appealing to the first article of Jewish faith (“the LORD is one,” Dt 6:4), Paul argues that there is only one way of salvation for both Jew and Gentile, namely, faith in Christ. (CSB)

Likely from the “Shema” confession (Dt 6:4) used in the synagogue liturgy and perhaps in early Christian gatherings. The OT and NT reveal the same God, who wants all to be saved. (TLSB)

*by faith ... through faith.* No distinction is implied by the change from “by” to “through.” The means of God’s salvation have always been the same. There are not different ways of salvation for different groups or dispensations. (TLSB)

**3:31** καταργοῦμεν—For καταργέω, see the fourth textual note on 3:3. Here again, it is difficult to see how humans could feasibly “nullify” God’s νόμος, so the sense is more likely “to make or render ineffective.”

ιστάνομεν—The verb ιστάνω is a later form of ἴστημι. For its transitive use here, BDAG, s.v. ἴστημι, A 4, gives “to validate someth[ing] that is in force or in practice, *reinforce validity of, uphold, maintain, validate.*” God himself established the Law and made it valid. Thus for the human response, “confirm the validity of” fits. In this verse, ἴστημι is the opposite of καταργέω. (CC)

### **Faith and the Law (3:31)**

Paul returns once again to the topic which began this section, the Law (3:21). Perhaps the notion that God will declare both the circumcised Jew and the uncircumcised Gentile righteous from and through the same faith is acceptable to the hearers of Romans by now. To suggest otherwise would be to abrogate the impartiality of the one who is God over all (2:11; 3:30). But Paul’s argument has surely obliterated the Law! This is the premise of the self-directed question which opens Rom 3:31. It utilizes “then” (οὖν) to introduce a false conclusion: “then do we make the Law ineffective through the faith?” The sense of the verb καταργέω is difficult here, as it was in 3:3, but here the antithetical expression in the latter half of the verse helps. Whatever the definition of καταργέω, the notion is firmly rejected by the intervening “may it never come to be!” (μὴ γένοιτο). Paul insists, instead, that through the faith “we confirm the validity of the Law” (3:31). (CC)

Dunn points out that the interchange between the two verbs in 3:31, “make ineffective” (καταργέω) and “confirm” (ἵστημι), may be rooted in a comparable Hebrew contrast “between לבטל (‘neglect, render futile, break’) and קים (‘uphold, fulfill, confirm’).” If applicable, this is helpful since it would be incomprehensible for Paul to conceive of humans actually “nullifying” or, even more impossibly, “establishing” God’s Law. The question at the beginning of 3:31 then asks whether faith neglects or breaks the Law. Paul’s response is that the faith, in fact, upholds or confirms the Law. (CC)

In the wider sense of Scripture, it is proper to suggest that the Law upholds “its function as that which convicts of sin and judicially puts to death, so that the Gospel may then come with its promise,” which is received through faith (see Gal 3:15–4:7; cf. Rom 11:32). It is also true that Christ’s obedient sacrifice has fulfilled the Law’s demands for all those who believe (3:24–25; 5:15–21; ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου πληρωθῇ in 8:4a; cf. 10:4). Paul will later speak of how those who live and love according to the Spirit also fulfill the Law (πλήρωμα οὖν νόμου ἢ ἀγάπη in 13:8–10; cf. 8:4b). The Apology of the Augsburg Confession identifies and applies the last alternative in 3:31 (Ap XX 15):

Furthermore, we have already given ample evidence of our conviction that good works must necessarily follow faith. We do not overthrow the law, Paul says (Rom. 3:31), but uphold it; for when we have received the Holy Spirit by faith, the keeping of the law necessarily follows, by which love, patience, chastity, and other fruits of the Spirit gradually increase. (CC)

But the Apology also reminds us that “we cannot correctly keep the law unless by faith we have received the Holy Spirit. Paul says that faith does not overthrow but upholds the law (Rom. 3:31)” (Ap IV 132; see also Ap IV 123–24). (CC)

At the end of Romans 3, it seems best to take “Law” (νόμος) as referring to the entire Mosaic Torah, as does the second instance of νόμος in 3:21 and the second instance of νόμος in 3:27. The concluding statement exemplifies what Romans 4 will soon explicate in detail. Faith is the human response which has always been called for by, and remains fully consistent with, the Torah. The present revelation of the righteousness of God through the faith of/in Jesus Christ is, *and always was*, for *all* who believe, including, most significantly, Abraham (see also 10:4). In 3:21–26 God’s righteousness is revealed and ratified. On that basis, 3:27–31 gives the implications and application of justification. Next, it is best to proceed directly to the Torah’s account of Abraham because it provides the most profound illustration, documentation, and verification of all that Paul has written. (CC)

### Excursus – πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, “Faith of/[in] Jesus Christ”

The question of whether Paul’s use of the genitive in πίστις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ and synonymous phrases is objective or subjective has spawned an extensive debate in recent decades. Does this expression speak of our “faith in Jesus Christ” (objective genitive) or the “faith[fulness] of Jesus Christ” (subjective genitive)? The passages which are the focus of this discussion are given below with the disputed phrases in bold:

- Rom 3:22a: δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ **διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ** εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας.
- Rom 3:26b: εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιῶντα **τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ**.
- Gal 2:16: εἰδότες [δὲ] ὅτι οὐ δικαιῶται ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἔργων νόμου ἐὰν μὴ **διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ**, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπιστεύσαμεν, ἵνα δικαιωθῶμεν **ἐκ πίστεως Χριστοῦ** καὶ οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων νόμου, ὅτι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ.

- Gal 2:20b: ὁ δὲ νῦν ζῶ ἐν σαρκί, **ἐν πίστει ζῶ τῇ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ** τοῦ ἀγαπήσαντός με καὶ παραδόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ ἐμοῦ.
- Gal 3:22b: ἵνα ἡ ἐπαγγελία **ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ** δοθῇ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν.
- Eph 3:12: ἐν ᾧ ἔχομεν τὴν παρρησίαν καὶ προσαγωγὴν ἐν πεποιθήσει **διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ.**
- Phil 3:9: καὶ εὐρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν **δικαιοσύνην** τὴν ἐκ νόμου ἀλλὰ **τὴν διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ**, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει.

Aside from Eph 3:12, all are in contexts in which Paul is discussing righteousness. The gist of the debate has, however, focused mainly on Romans 3 and Galatians 2. (CC)

The phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ has been examined through a variety of approaches—grammatical, historical, linguistic, contextual, and theological. A few scholars have concluded that the debate is now resolved, but since scholars on both sides of the argument have made that assertion, this is clearly not the case. (CC)

† Paul anticipated being charged with antinomianism (being against law): If justification comes through faith alone, then is not the law rejected? He gives a more complete answer in chs. 6–7 and reasserts the validity of the law in 13:8–10. (CSB)

The Gospel does not ignore the Law; the Law is upheld because Christ perfectly fulfilled it. (TLSB)

**3:21–31** Vv 23–24 demonstrate human equality—all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory. We are alike in our corruption and fallenness. But all humanity has also been redeemed by Christ. Sinners may draw distinctions between people, but God does not. He would save us all through Christ. • Lord Jesus Christ, Redeemer of the world, thank You for Your salvation. Empower me to share Your gift with others. Amen. (TLSB)