

Salvation in Christ Alone

Romans 3:21-26

Leader Discussion guide

Illustrations Used:

- Scene of darkness, giant storm, settled in over the home of humanity. (Rom 1-3)
- What would happen if you hit your dog, police officer, president, God?
- Courtroom scene: hear the words not guilty at your trial.
- Propitiation: used in OT to describe “mercy seat” in the Tabernacle.
- Reporter stepping behind building in a hurricane.
- Donald Smarto standing at the foot of the cross.

Comprehension Questions:

1. Pray and read the passage.
2. Martin Luther called this passage “the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle to the Romans, and of the whole Bible.” What in this passage lead him to say that?
3. Describe the illustration of the scene of darkness. Read Romans 1:18, 2:5, 3:10-12, 3:19-20. How does this illustration match what is happening in these passages?
 - a. How does Romans 3:21-22 relate to those passages?
4. What does justified mean?
5. Problem: Isn't it unjust to declare sinners righteous? See Probers 17:15.
 - a. Discuss the options
 - i. Be righteous. Do enough good stuff. (Good outweighs bad –Islam; “good person”
 - ii. Pay for unrighteousness – purgatory, karma, penance
 - iii. Treasury of merit from the Roman Catholic Church
 - iv. Biblical Answer: Romans 3:24-25
6. What does propitiation mean? What is the “great exchange?”
7. Which illustration was most helpful to you in understanding the truth of Romans 3?
 - a. Leader, you may quickly want to ask group members to summarize each illustration.

Application Questions:

1. What is your faith in?
 - a. Yourself? Your goodness? Your church involvement? Your Baptism?
2. This is good news to share with:
 - a. Others – do we know how to explain salvation in Jesus? Leader you may demonstrate or ask a volunteer to explain the gospel message. Or bring a resource like, “Two ways to live.”
 - b. Yourself – The truth of the gospel should have a regular place in the heart and mind of the believer. How can the truth of Christ Alone encourage the believer? How does it encourage you?
3. Consider sharing your testimony or having people in the group share their testimonies. This question should be done carefully and you may want to ask someone beforehand instead of on the spot. You also may give them a 3-5 minute time limit.

Extended Outline:

Intro: The most important question in the world: how can I be right with God? The Bible is given to us by God to help us have the right answer.

At the time of the Reformation in the 1500s there was a general confusion about what it took to be made right with God. In the coming weeks, we will see core biblical truths about salvation that were re-discovered and proclaimed during the Protestant Reformation. This morning, we will talk of salvation in Christ alone. At the time of Martin Luther, in addition to trusting in Christ, people were taught they needed to receive His saving grace through the rituals of the church: Christ + church, Mary, saints, etc.

Reformers saw a clear truth: people are saved in Christ alone.

Romans 3:21-26

Illus: Martin Luther called this passage “the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle to the Romans, and of the whole Bible.” It reveals salvation in Christ alone.

1. A contrast: We are sinners, and are declared righteous.

a. **Romans 1-3: The problem of our sin and God’s wrath.**

- i. **Illus:** Like a scene of darkness setting in. It is like a giant storm, with raging winds has settled in over the home of humanity.
- ii. **App:** Look at 1:18 – the wrath of God is revealed Romans 2:5 – Storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath. Well, maybe I can escape? 3:10-12. 3:19-20 – Every mouth stopped.

b. **The solution of God’s righteousness - V21- But now.**

- i. BUT NOW. It is as if sunlight has begun to fill the house. Light has come: “The righteousness of God.”
- i. **v22.** Rather than wrath, righteousness. And all of that in Jesus.

c. **V23-24 – another contrast.**

ii. **v23 – We are sinners.**

1. Our sin deserves justice.
2. **Illus:** What would happen if you hit your dog? A police officer? The President? What if you hit God?

iii. **V24 – God will declare sinners righteous.**

1. “justified” – means to be declared righteous. Justification is a declarative or judicial act.
2. **Illus:** Courtroom scene: to hear the words “Not guilty.”
 - a. **App:** Now imagine standing before judgment seat of God – **RIGHTEOUS!**

d. **Problem:** Isn’t it unjust to declare sinners righteous?

iv. **Illus:** Judge acquitting a guilty person.

v. Proverbs 17:15 “He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike and abomination to the Lord.”

vi. Romans 4:5 – “justified the ungodly.”

vii. Bible’s question is, “**How can a righteous and just God let any of us sinners go to heaven?**”

2.) So the question how are we (sinners) declared righteous by a holy God?

a. Options:

- i. Be righteous. Do enough good stuff.
 1. Good deeds outweigh the bad as in Islam.
 2. “be a good person.”

- ii. Pay for the unrighteousness – purgatory, karma, penance.
 - iii. Get righteousness from somewhere:
 - iv. **Illus:** The RC church teaches there is a treasury of merit. The treasury of merit is filled with the merit of Christ and Mary, and the saints, who had more than enough merit to enter heaven themselves. This merit is now available to others to “supplement” their own meritorious works. Pope can distribute this merit.
 - 1. Papal “indulgences” prompted Martin Luther to nail the 95 theses to the door. Pay money for merit. Luther said, no!
- b. Bible answer:
- i. 3:24 – “justified by his grace as a gift.” – grace/gift
 - ii. V25 – “To be received by faith.”

3.) V24-25 – God justifies us in Christ alone.

- a. V24 – we are justified, “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” V25 – Propitiation – God put forward Jesus as a propitiation.
 - i. Basically, it means “wrath bearer.”
 - 1. **Illus:** Used in OT to describe “mercy seat” in the Tabernacle.
 - 2. Blood from sacrifice sprinkled so God’s wrath wouldn’t be poured out on a sinful people.
 - 3. **Illus:** Reporter stepping behind a building in a hurricane.
 - ii. The wrath of God is aimed at us because of our sin.
 - 1. But God, in the person of Christ stepped in and took the wrath, so that we can receive mercy.
 - 2. **Illus:** Courtroom: Justice demands 10 million find I can’t pay. No hope. Then someone gives their 10 million for me.
 - iii. **App:** 10 million was not enough to satisfy the justice we deserved.
- b. **V25** – “by His blood.”
 - i. 1 Peter 1:18-19.
 - ii. **2 Corinthians 5:21** – Jesus’ took sin and gave His righteousness.
- c. V26 – solves the problem. “that He might be just” – There is still justice for all of our sins. V26 - “and the justifier” – But now we can be made right.

4.) Conclusion: How can we be right with God? Christ alone.

- a. Not our goodness. Not the merits of others. Not our efforts to make up for our sins. Not baptism, or the Lord’s Supper. Not being a member of the church. No church can make you right with God.
- b. Christ alone can make us right with God. He has died for sinners, takes our sin, and gives us His righteousness. He is our only hope.
- c. So what should we do? Place your faith in Christ alone.
 - i. V25 – “to be received by faith.”
 - ii. V26 – He justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.
- d. **App:** What is your faith in? Yourself? Your goodness? Your church involvement? Your baptism? Trust in Christ alone.

Illus: Donald Smarto standing at the foot of a cross.

Now I knew, I really knew, that Christ had died for me. It was coupled with the more important revelation that I was a sinner, that I was not the good person I had thought I was a moment before. All at once I embraced the telephone pole and began to cry. I must have hugged that piece of wood for nearly an hour. I could imagine Jesus nailed to this pole, blood dripping from his wounds. I felt as if the blood were dripping over me, cleansing me of my sin and unworthiness.