

Romans 3

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Preacher: Dr Antony Latham

[0 : 00] We're going to sing from Psalm 103, verses 1 to 10. Psalm 103, verses 1 to 10. O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord, and all that in me is, be stirred up his holy name to magnify and bless.

So let's praise the Lord together. O thou, my soul, bless God the Lord, and all that in me is, be stirred up his holy name to magnify and bless.

Bless, O my soul, the Lord thy God, and all forget for me.

Of all his gracious benefits he hath bestowed on thee.

All thine iniquities, who does most graciously forgive, who thy diseases fall and pain, doth him and he relieve.

[1 : 59] Who doth redeem thy life, not thou, to death is not for God.

Who thee with glory, kindness, God, and tender mercies come.

Who with abundance of good things, does not satisfy thy love.

So that he let the eagles sing, bring you and inspire you.

God's righteous judgment, God's righteous judgment executes, God of all blessed ones, His grace to Moses, He is and made known to his rest.

[3 : 38] The Lord our God is merciful, And he is gracious, Long-suffering and scour to run, In mercy, Clintias, He will not shine continually, Nor give his hunger still.

With us he dealt, Not as we sinned, Nor give requite our ill.

He will not chide continually, Nor keep his anger still. With us he dealt not as we sinned, Nor did requite our ill.

Lord, we thank you as we come together this morning, That we come in the name of Jesus Christ. We thank you that you do not deal with us According to our sins as we deserve, But because of what Jesus has done for us In taking the penalty for our sins, We are able to come before you, And gain access to you, And to know you.

And we just thank you, Lord, That you are here with us today. And we pray that all of us will still our hearts, That we will know your presence, That your spirit will be in charge In this meeting today.

[5 : 32] That you will be glorified in all that we do. We just thank you for this opportunity, And this time of the week, Your special day, To be able to come before you, And to worship you, Whom to worship is freedom and joy.

Lord, we just pray that, Each person here during this service, That you will touch them, In their own individual way. You know our hearts, Lord, Better than we know ourselves.

You search our hearts. You know our thoughts, When we are waking and sleeping. You know everything about us, Lord. And that is great, And that's good, Because you are the perfect, Good physician, Willing to heal our hearts, And bring us hope, And peace, And forgiveness.

And Lord, as we come before you today, We think of those who are not able to join us today. We pray for all of those who, For one reason or another, Perhaps they're away on holidays, Perhaps they're sick.

Perhaps there's another reason. We ask you, Lord, To be with them. And we ask you, Lord, To touch them wherever they are. Particularly pray for our minister, David, And Mary, And the girls.

[6 : 47] Lord, that on their break away from here, That you bless them, You encourage them, And that you help them in every way, To be refreshed. For when they come back.

And we look forward so much to them coming back to us. And we pray for all of those who are sick. Many that we know in the community. Lord, we pray that you would put your strengthening hand upon them.

And if it is your will to heal those who are sick, Lord, We know that you can do everything. We pray, Lord, for peace for anybody who is ill.

That whatever the sickness may be, That they will know the peace of God, Which passes all understanding. That they can have full and complete communion with you.

Whatever the situation. We pray for those who are grieving this weekend. As we hear of another death in the community. And we pray for all of those, The family, The loved ones, And those who are grieving.

[7 : 54] And we ask you, Lord, To be with them. And to help them. And that they will know a special presence from you. At this difficult time. We thank you for our visitors today.

We thank you for all of those from the youth who are in the presbytery. Who have come to stay at the Scalladale Centre. And we are overjoyed to see them here today. We pray that you will really bless them.

Not just in this service, But the whole weekend. And that it will be a special time. Of each person. Each young one. Coming to know you better.

Or to know you for the first time. So, Lord, we commit ourselves to you. And we thank you. For all that you have done for us. We ask your blessing upon our community.

We pray, Lord, that you come in grace and power. As you have done many times before. Into this community. So that Jesus will be lifted up.

[8 : 52] And people will see. And know that the Lord is good. And that the Lord is Jesus Christ. We ask, Lord, that we be good witnesses. That we shine your light in this community.

We cannot do this in our own strength, Lord. We are weak. We are frail. We are unable. But, Lord, give us the opportunities. Wherever it may be.

To be able to shine your light. And we ask all of these things in the name of Jesus. Amen. Boys and girls, would you like to come forward?

No? I need you here. Sorry. I have to have you here. Because I can't give this talk to you. Right? Come along with your parents, if you like.

Ah, well done. It's good to see you. Yeah. Oh, that's wonderful.

[9 : 59] Thank you. How are you this morning? How are things? Yeah. You alright? Yeah? Good? Okay. Look, it's lovely to see you.

And also to see all the other young ones and the old ones. So it's marvellous to see you all. Ah, here's some support. I have your cars.

You've got your cars. That's good. Yeah. I've got a few things in this bag. I wonder what's in here. Let's have a look. Now, maybe you'll tell me what that is. Yeah? What's that? That's set stove. Yeah.

I know your mommy used to come in. So what's the set stove used for? Any idea? Yeah? For, here's a compliment someone's heart. Someone's heart. Someone's heart. Absolutely. Yeah. So it's really, really useful when you want to listen to somebody's heart.

Okay? So you probably, have you had a doctor or a nurse listening to you? Yeah. That's a good one. I mean, I don't know what that is. I don't know. It's a good one. Yeah. It's a good one.

[10 : 56] Yeah. Yeah. So it's really, really useful for when you want to listen to somebody's heart. Okay? So you probably, have you had a doctor or a nurse listening to you?

No. What about that? No. I was in a doctor on the ambulance. In the ambulance? Yeah. I hope you weren't in the ambulance. Maybe you were. Yeah. Yeah, no, I love that.

Okay. Anyway, it's very, this is a really useful thing because when I put this into my ears or one of the nurses or the other doctors do this and we listen to the chest or somewhere we can, we can, we can, we can, we can put it in your ear and then put it in your ear and then put it in your ear.

Exactly. You've got it exactly. And it's really, really useful because we're able to listen to what goes on inside. Okay? Because if we just look at, if we just look at, if we just look at somebody, if I just look at you, then I don't know exactly what's going on inside you, do I?

I need to listen. I put this on the chest and I can listen to what's going on. Sometimes we hear things that are not going right. So this is why doctors and nurses do this.

[12 : 15] We have a listen to the chest, for instance. We hear the heart beating and we can actually tell if it's beating properly or if the bits and pieces are in the heart are working right. And if they're not working right, if they're not working right, if they're not working right, they're what?

They're going to put on the stomach and take the leg. Okay. We listen and we find out what's wrong so that we can do something about it. Okay?

So there's no point in just listening if we can't actually work out what to do and try and get something to help somebody who's sick. Isn't that right? It's not a problem. There's no point in doing it.

Now I've got something else in here. It's actually very difficult for me to let everybody listen through this. I've got something else in here.

I don't know if you know what this is. I borrowed this from the nurses. I hope it works. This is actually a very useful machine because when I turn this on and I put this on the skin, I can actually hear it through a loudspeaker.

[13 : 27] Would you like to hear that? Yes. I can actually hear the heart. Now nurses usually use this for listening to babies when they're inside mommy's tummy. It's very useful for hearing the baby's heart.

But you can do it today. Can I have one volunteer? All I want to do is put this on your chest. Can I do it here? Yes. One of you guys. It's very, very simple.

All I have to do is put this here. Okay? I think I'm going to have to do it on my own chest. And we can do it on my dad's chest. And we can do it on my dad's chest. All I have to do is put this here.

Okay? I think I'm going to have to do it on my own chest. And we can do it on my dad's chest. We can do it on my dad's chest. All right. As long as there'll be nice, you're opening my shirt.

Look, I'm going to put some nice gooey stuff on. Are you sure you wouldn't like it to do it for you? No? No? No? No? No. Okay. Well, I'm going to do it on my own chest. Okay?

[14 : 24] I'll put some gooey stuff on here, and I'll put it against my chest like this.

like this. I hear it. Don't go to this in too long.

My five-thirty roll. Okay. I'll just wipe all that blue stuff off.

Okay. So, listen. Why on earth am I doing this today in the middle of the church? There's a verse in the Bible which is actually from the Old Testament and it was when God was trying to choose a king for Israel.

You don't remember King David? Well, when they were trying to choose the king, Samuel the prophet was looking at all the different people and eventually God chose the youngest of a group of young young men who wasn't who was just out in the field looking after the sheep but what God said to Samuel was this the Lord does not look at the things people look at.

[15 : 57] The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart. The Lord looks at the heart.

So, what this is saying and you can read this throughout the Bible is that God sees inside us a bit like the doctor and the nurse finding out what's going on inside us.

But God actually knows everything about us. He knows our thoughts what we want to do and what we don't want to do. He knows the good things and he knows the bad things as well.

So, he knows everything about us. In fact, there's no point in really trying to hide from God at all because he already knows what's in there. There's no way the bad thing is in the old team.

That's fine. The point is that we we have this God who created us who made us who knows everything about us. And so the lesson that I really want to bring today for all of us both the young and the old is there's no point in really trying to hide from God.

[17 : 07] It's easy to do that maybe if you do something wrong and you try to hide it from the teacher or your mum and dad or your sister or your brother or something.

There's absolutely no point in doing that with God because he already knows what's going deep inside us. That's one thing. There's no point in trying to hide all that because God already knows it.

But that's a good thing because God Jesus has been called the great physician which is like the great doctor far better than any doctor that you go to in Harris.

Jesus is the one who sees inside and sees what's wrong with us or what's right with us. He knows what to do. He knows what to do to make us better.

And so we need to come to Jesus. And so that's really the lesson for all of us today that we need always to come to Jesus as we are.

[18 : 05] We don't have to suddenly change and do something to make ourselves better. Just come as we are to Jesus Christ because he's the one who made us and he's the one who can fix everything that is wrong with us.

So let's just pray together. Heavenly Father, we just thank you that you are the great physician, the one who's able to see deep inside us all our motives and our thoughts and our desires and the things that are good and the things that are not so good.

Lord, help each one of us, the young ones and the old ones, to come to you and as Jesus said, come unto me all who are weary and heavy laden.

We thank you that you have open arms for each one of us. So help us to do that in Jesus' name. Amen. I'm now going to ask John to come and pray and guide for us.

to be focusing in, and how do you I've held the same brokenness of the tr longue hand in■re practice visualization, as it is still the template.

[19 : 47] God bless you.

God bless you.

God bless you.

God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you.

[22 : 19] God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you.

God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. Oh my God.

God bless you. God bless you. God bless you. Hey guys. isons. And a peg was kind in there got a hand .

Gigaga vastu tei ae dispara has proved that there's a lot of grit and man champagne.

Has worked whenilia separated, and we're there as a door that kind of cuts into it. Black people can be there, and they're not going there going forward to you.

[24 : 00] All . And we're now going to read from the Bible, Romans chapter 3.

Romans chapter 3, beginning of verse 1. Romans chapter 3, reading the whole chapter.

Romans chapter 3, beginning of verse 1.

Romans chapter 3, beginning of verse 1. But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us?

I'm using a human argument. Certainly not. If that were so, how could God judge the world? Someone might argue, if my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?

[25 : 56] Why not say, as we are being slanderously reported as saying, and as some claim that we say, let us do evil that good may result. Their condemnation is deserved.

What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all. We have already made the charge that the Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written, there is no one righteous, not even one.

There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away. They have together become worthless. There is no one who does good, not even one.

Their throats are open graves. Their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood.

Ruin and misery mark their ways. And the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced.

[27 : 02] And the whole world held accountable to God. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight, I observe in the law. Rather, through the law, we may become conscious of sin.

But now, a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe.

There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.

He did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just, and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. Where then is boasting?

[28 : 08] It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. For we maintain that as a man is justified by faith, apart from observing the law.

Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too. Since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith, and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

Do we then nullify the law by this faith? Not at all. Rather, we uphold the law. This is the word of God. Now I'm going to sing again from Psalm 103 in Gaelic, verses 11 and 12.

Psalm 103 in Gaelic, verses 11 and 12. I'll just get that in my Bible here, so that we can read those verses in English first.

Psalm 103, 11 and 12. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him.

[29 : 26] As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. We remain seated as we sing this. Lord, let us tune the Tala Vita, the Spain in the love of God.

God bless. Oh, my God.

Oh, my God.

Oh, my God.

Oh, my God.

[31 : 44] Oh, my God.

Oh, my God.

Oh, my God.

Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

[34 : 22] Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

Oh, my God. rip Ugh, I'm, oh, my God. things are not world. Oh, my God. Oh, my God. hear a lot of. When he justifies somebody, he declares that person free of guilt, just as a judge would in court. If a judge says, you're free, you have no guilt. That's being justified with God. And a person who is justified is also declared righteous, because they're very close to being justified and being declared righteous, or more or less the same thing.

And it's not a righteousness, as we're going to see here, that can be earned. It's a free gift, and it depends on faith, our faith, and what Christ has done for us in paying the penalty for our sin. And it's also, as we'll see, it's a righteousness that is not even our own righteousness. It is Christ's righteousness, imputed to us, transferred to us.

[36 : 04] Credited to us freely, as we put our faith in him. And the central problem of the human race, for all of us, is that we have fallen short of God's glory. We cannot keep his law perfectly, no matter how hard we try. And we are by nature, if we look deep inside ourselves, we are nature sinners from birth. And the justice of God demands punishment for sin. I'm so glad that God is a just God, and that he doesn't overlook sin. I think that's such a wonderful thing. I wouldn't feel like worshipping God if he was not just, and abhorred sin. So he's a just God, and he cannot overlook sin. But he is perfect and holy. There must be justice, there must be a penalty for sin. But you and I are helpless. Thank God that he has provided a way for us to come back to him, and be justified, and be declared righteous. So let's look at these verses carefully. Verse 21, I'll read it again.

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the law and the prophets testify. And the first thing we can see is that this righteousness is from God. If you look also at chapter 1, verse 17.

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed. The righteousness is from God. You might say, well, I knew that, and just want to carry on. But hold on a moment. What does this really mean? This righteousness, this right relationship with God cannot be from ourselves.

Now people have been protesting about this for centuries. Why should I not earn my own right standing with God? I can try hard. I can observe God's laws. I can even grit my teeth and try to do everything right. I can attend church. I can go to prayer meetings. I can give all my money away. I'm not really too bad a person. There's a part of us deep down that wants proudly to achieve our own righteousness. That's why Paul goes on and on about it, being not from ourselves. We want to do it in our way, by our efforts. And many, many people think that they could turn up in heaven and say, look, I tried hard. But the truth is that this would not satisfy God for a moment. And the Bible is absolutely clear about this. Isaiah 64, 6.

All our righteous acts are like filthy rags. And Paul sums it up this in verse 20 in the same chapter. Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law, by trying to follow the law. We'll see later that the law is still good. But by us trying to be righteous through following it doesn't work. And I think part of becoming a Christian is coming to this realization that we are utterly helpless. Are you feeling helpless in your sin?

[39 : 30] If so, that's a good thing. Because you are on the road to righteousness. If we feel that we are helpless in managing our own sin, then that's good. We cannot do it on our own.

The other thing that we can see from this first verse is that righteousness is available now. He says, but now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known.

Paul makes it clear that something new has happened. It's available now. All of this is part of his proclamation of the gospel. Something remarkable and wonderful has happened. The law and the prophets, leading all the way up to this, spoke of this coming righteousness. Now it has been made known at last. Isaiah 46, 13. I am bringing my righteousness near. It is not far away and my salvation will not be delayed. Jeremiah 23, 6. In his days, that's talking about the Messiah, Jesus. Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he has been called. The Lord, our righteousness. Now that now that he speaks of in this verse is also today here in Tarbert for each one of us. The righteousness that we all long for is made known to us here today on Sunday, the 22nd of October, 2017.

So that's another thing we can find out from this verse. The next thing that I'm going to bring out, it is apart from the law. And our righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known. And once again, we return to the great truth that we cannot achieve this righteousness by observing the law. The law is perfect, but we as imperfect human beings are utterly unable to attain the standard required. We are lost and helpless on our own. I think most of us know that deep down inside. We simply can't. Just look at the Ten Commandments. How do we keep those perfectly? We can't do it on our own. Paul amplifies this in chapter 4, the next chapter in the epistle, when he talks about the faith of Abraham. And it's really worth looking at Abraham, who is our example of faith. Verses 1 to 3. I'll just read these out. What then should we say that Abraham, our forefather, discovered in this matter? If in fact Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about. But not before

God. What does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness. That's from Genesis 15. God showed Abraham the stars in the sky and told him that his offspring would be like these. I'm just trying to imagine this old man with an old wife being brought out and looking at the stars, hundreds of thousands of them and said, your offspring is going to be like this. Would you believe that? Abraham did. He trusted that God could do anything. Abraham and Sarah were well past the age of having children, but Abraham believed. He trusted in God's word to him.

[43 : 13] And he's the great example of faith. Nothing to do with works whatsoever. And it's worth reading a bit further in the same chapter 4. You might want to open this in your Bibles from verse 18, chapter 4.

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, so shall your offspring be. Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead since he was about a hundred years old, and that Sarah's womb was also dead. Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why it was credited to him as righteousness. Now this word credited to him as righteousness occurs nine times, apparently, I haven't counted them all, nine times in chapter 4. And this is exactly what happens to us as well.

The righteousness of Jesus is credited to us. The words that was credited to him were written not for him alone, but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness, for us who believe in him, who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. The next thing I want to come to in verse 22. It is through faith in Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 22. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. And if we cannot get right with God by our own efforts and by observing the law, how then can we?

What is left? It is faith. We have to put our faith in Christ. Look at all the other religions. They have their own sort of faith, but their faith never saves. They don't even pretend that faith saves.

[45 : 29] The only hope given in other religions is for the individual to try very hard to live a righteous life, according to the rules of that religion. Now they may have faith in a God or gods, but that is not considered by themselves even to be saving. All other religions require works and following rules, some of which may be good, such as helping the poor, but they offer nothing through simple faith.

And Christianity is unique in this regard. Christianity, the Gospel says, you can do nothing at all to save yourself. Nothing. Every other religion says precisely the opposite. Your salvation and your reincarnation or your entry into paradise depends on you, your works and your life. And this is where we differ completely, totally and radically from the other religions.

And why is this a block to so many people? Who here, perhaps today, has that block? Many of us will have had it in the past.

Why is it so hard to accept such a simple fact that it is simply through faith that we are made right with God? No wonder Jesus said that it is those who become like little children who enter the kingdom.

You see, faith is trust, the giving over of your life to the one you put your faith in. And it's not the same as belief. Satan believes in Jesus. Faith is trusting and putting your life in the hands of Jesus.

[47 : 15] Jesus. I don't know if you've ever seen any tightrope walkers. Apparently some tightrope walkers have actually put a wire across the Niagara Falls and have actually walked on this wire across this huge gap across these mighty falls in Canada.

Some even, I believe, have used a wheelbarrow and have gone across with something in the wheelbarrow and gone from one side to the other. Now, I just imagine if you were standing on the side and you saw this.

This is amazing. Gosh, this is phenomenal what this guy is able to do. I really believe that he can do this. I've seen him do it. And then the tightrope walkers says, OK, you believe that? Get into the wheelbarrow.

Get in. I'll bring you across. Now, that is putting trust in the man. This is a very poor illustration, but it's some sort of an illustration of putting a trust in Jesus.

Putting a life in his hands. Not just knowing about him. Putting a trust in him. Verse 22. It is available to all who believe.

[48 : 30] This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. See the word all. It reminds us of John 3.16.

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Whoever. That's all who believe in him. 2 Peter 3.9. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

1 Timothy 2.3 and 4. This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Don't get me wrong. We can't do this just through a decision. Only God can draw you to Jesus. And if you're already considering this, if this is already something in your heart, then believe that God is drawing you to Jesus.

[49 : 36] We can't do it without him. But this is a promise. If you put your faith in Christ, you will have the righteousness of Christ, and you will be right with him. Now you may be sitting here thinking, as many people do, and if you talk to people who haven't become Christians yet, or are thinking about it, you might be thinking, I have to do something very complicated, and I have to become a better person.

But it's not complicated, and you cannot make it easier by becoming a better person. You might be waiting for some great revelation from God to bring you to a position of faith.

Well, you have a revelation of God here in the scriptures. But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

You might be thinking that you need some special emotion or feeling before you come to Christ. But this is not about emotion. It's got nothing to do with emotion.

They may come in, it's fine, but it has nothing to do with how you feel. It's just a fact. You put your trust in Jesus. The next thing to find out about this righteousness is that we are all in the same boat.

[50 : 58] Verse 22 and 23. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

You may be here thinking that there is a difference between those strong believers and yourself. But the Bible actually says there's no difference between all of us here in this room.

No difference as far as sin is concerned. There are no favorites in God's eyes, no top-of-the-class pupils, no special people who only merit God's favor. We're all in the same boat.

And it has nothing to do with how virtuous a life I lead. It's not that God doesn't want you to live a virtuous life, but the salvation has nothing to do with that. Nothing to do with respectability.

Nothing to do with any personal achievements. The king and the beggar, the prime minister, and one of these children here, they're all in the same boat.

[52 : 06] There is no difference. All have fallen short. And so there's no place for someone saying to themselves, ah, wait until I get into a better position.

Or wait until God speaks to me. Or wait until the moment seems right. It's right today. It's right today. The next thing is from verse 24.

It is free. Let's just read that. We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came from Christ Jesus. Now this is what's really shocking and what actually is a stumbling block to many people.

The greatest possible gift with the greatest possible value and eternal value is free. Ah, but you might be saying to yourself, there's a cost to becoming a Christian, surely.

Yes, there's a cost in that your life is not going to be a bed of roses. You can all testify to that. But the gift itself is completely and totally free.

[53 : 16] Now over the centuries, men and women have tried to add some cost to becoming saved. They've added all sorts of rules and rights. They've said you must do this.

You ought to prepare yourself and do all sorts of good things first. They've said you ought to behave and you should dress in a particular way. You must prepare yourself.

But all of this is actually nonsense. It's free. And I think the greatest illustration of this is the thief on the cross. Just think about it.

He put his faith in Jesus as he was nailed to a cross. He was dying. What could he do to reform his life?

Absolutely nothing. What could he do to make amends for his past sins? Nothing. What could he do to make himself more presentable? Nothing.

[54 : 18] And the list can go on. You put any of the barriers that men put between you and Jesus and see if the thief on the cross could have achieved anything at all to go over those man-made barriers.

He could do absolutely nothing except put his faith in Jesus. It's free. And this is the glorious truth of the Gospel.

And as the verse says here, we are justified freely. I'm reminded of the verse in Isaiah 55 which speaks about this free grace.

Come all you who are thirsty. Come to the waters. And you who have no money come buy and eat. Come buy wine and milk without money and without cost.

And later on in verse 6 Seek the Lord while he may be found. Call on him while he is near. He is near right now. Okay, it's free but it was not without cost to Jesus.

[55 : 20] Verse 24 to 25 We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood.

It's free but it wasn't cheap. It cost Jesus everything. Through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement it might be propitiation in your book through faith in his blood.

And we must always, always remember what it cost Jesus to purchase our freedom. As our representative the only perfect man who is also God he went through the foulest form of torture and abandonment on a cross and shed his blood to make atonement for our sin.

And this was planned from eternity we know that from the Old Testament. We read about it clearly prophesied this was God's plan to redeem us to give us righteousness. We are justified that's the next thing we can look at verse 24 We are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

this means that we are declared not guilty and this is a legal term I'm going to quote from one of the theologians here Justification is the declarative act of God by which on the basis of the sufficiency of Christ's atoning death he pronounces believers to have fulfilled all the requirements of the law.

[57 : 05] justification is the forensic act of imputing the righteousness of Christ to the believer. Now please note that this is something that is forensic and legally binding.

it's not infusing the believer with some sort of holiness and making a better person that might come later by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Justification is a declaring of the believer to satisfy the law on the basis of Christ's atoning death. There's an illustration all these illustrations are inadequate but this is an illustration that you might have heard.

There was a judge in a court and he was administering justice and before him came an old friend of his he didn't realise he was coming but in the dock he saw this old friend who'd come on bad times who'd been found stealing.

And the judge had to bring about a decision and he declared him guilty. And he imposed a very large fine on this chap who was his old friend he hadn't seen for a long time.

[58 : 18] So he did what he had to do he imposed the fine he then came down from his chair he went up to the man he took his wallet out and he gave him the money and said here is the price.

Now there are many problems with that as an illustration but it gives a little bit of an illustration an idea of what God has done for us he has paid the price. When a judge declares an accused person in court to have satisfied all the requirements of the Lord are set free then that is legally binding.

And this is pure justice. If you read again verse 25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood he did this to demonstrate his justice.

Now we might think that this somehow is not very good justice. how can we simply be made righteous if we have sinned and Christ is the one who suffered.

Let me quote again from a commentary. This legal declaration is valid because Christ died to pay the penalty for our sin and lived a life of perfect righteousness that in turn can be imputed to us.

[59 : 37] Now you and I actually will never fully understand all this. There's no theologian who fully plumbs the depths of this. So don't worry. But we can get the idea that is important.

You and I will never plumb the depths of it. But the penalty of sin had to be paid and one perfect human being was able to do that. Jesus.

The God man. And if you ever doubt God's love for you, then meditate on this. He didn't have to, but he came and he died in your place, in my place.

The good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. And would you not want to put your trust in such a saviour? What does it mean when he says in verse 25, he did this to demonstrate his justice?

Because in his forbearance he left the sins committed beforehand unpunished. somebody else wrote, the sins of God's people punished symbolically in the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament would be totally punished in the once for all sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

[60 : 46] You see, those Old Testament sacrifices were like a shadow of the real thing. At last, now, the salvation is available, the righteousness of God.

It's now available because those were just shadows of the pure, perfect, once and for all sacrifice. We should remember briefly that righteousness is also part of the armour of God.

In Ephesians chapter 6, when we are under attack, we are told to put on the breastplate of righteousness, which covers our heart, which covers the most important part of our body.

and it's Christ's righteousness. That's a wonderful thing. We can say to the devil, I have his righteousness, not mine. And that protects us when we are under attack. The next thing, and we're getting close to the end, is boasting is excluded.

Verse 27, where then is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. Paul is speaking to the believers now.

[61 : 59] You see, any righteousness we have is entirely from God, and is on the basis of something that Jesus has done. It's free grace. You simply have to have faith.

And so how can anyone even dream of boasting about being a Christian? 2 Corinthians 10, 17, let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. But, we've all had this, pride, can easily get in, can't it?

It's very, very subtle. Look at me, look at me. How easily we can revert to thinking that somehow we have achieved something ourselves.

We've achieved nothing. All is from God. And there's no place in our hearts for pride or boasting except in Christ. We're allowed to boast in him.

That's good. That's good. Let us be wary of any hint of puffing up or self-congratulation about our own righteousness because we don't have any. It's all Christ imputed to us.

[63 : 06] And sometimes, unfortunately, the church has given the impression to unbelievers that somehow Christians are better or more worthy than those outside the church.

Nothing can be further from the truth. That's pride. right. And it's excluded by the word of God here. Let's briefly finish verse 29 and 30.

Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

So justification is to the Jews and to the Gentiles. this is to confirm that it's not just by obeying the Old Testament law and being part of a particular group of people.

It's for everyone. It's for us. After all, anyone who hears the gospel can put their faith in Jesus Christ. That's a wonderful thing. And lastly, verse 31.

[64 : 07] Do we then nullify the law by this faith? Not at all. Rather, we uphold the law. The law. What God's rules are not bad. On the contrary, they're very, very, very good.

The Ten Commandments are wonderful. But they don't lead to justification simply because we're not able to keep them perfectly. Let's just summarize this passage.

It says so much, and I know that I haven't given it justice, because you could spend the whole day on just one verse in this wonderful passage.

But we must be encouraged by it. the righteousness that we have is from God. It is available now. It is apart from the law.

It is through faith in Jesus Christ. It is available to all. We are all in the same boat. We all have sinned. It is free.

[65 : 10] It costs Jesus everything because he loves us. It is part of justification, being declared not guilty. It is based on perfect justice.

The perfect man took the penalty for our sins. And boasting is completely excluded. And if you're already a Christian here today, then let us be reminded and eternally thankful that this is not from ourselves.

I'm so glad it's not from me. Because I would be striving all the time and never get anywhere. It's not from ourselves, but we rejoice in the fact that God so loved us that he gave Jesus to die on the cross to make us right with him.

And we are credited with his righteousness. If today you have not yet come to faith, may these words of scripture move you to put your faith, your life in the hands of Jesus today.

Without delay. Let's pray. Dear Lord, thank you for this incredible part of scripture which is the heart of the gospel, the wonderful good news that we are given a free salvation.

[66 : 37] We are made righteous freely by putting our trust in and believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Help each one here Lord to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and to continually put our trust in him.

We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.