

Paul writes:

21 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify.

22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

25 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 –

26 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.

27 Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith.

28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.

29 Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too,

30 since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.

31 Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law. (NIV)

Having stated in chapter 3, verse 20 that "no one will be declared righteous in His sight by observing the law," Paul picks up the key ideas of chapter 1, verses 16-17 and develops them.

Chapter 3, verse 21 is a sharp contrast to verse 20. Paul says: "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify."

In our first session we noted the term "the righteousness of God" in chapter 1, verse 17, and said that this term has four meanings. The righteousness of God can mean:

(1) God's characteristic or attribute of righteousness, that quality of His nature that speaks of His uprightness of character and actions and His justice

(2) God's standard of righteousness, His law, which defines uprightness and sinfulness for human beings and reflects His upright character