

**REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 3: 21-26**  
**PREACHED ON DECEMBER 28, 2025 BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER**

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 He did it to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- One of the main topics addressed in Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome is God's righteousness. Righteousness is being blameless as regards your relationship, first with God and secondly with your fellow human being. It is being upright in heart and life. In other words, it is living as God desires man to live. This meant being righteous required absolute conformity to God's laws, perfectly keeping God's law as stated in the Ten Commandments.
- In our texts for today, Paul takes up the same topic of God's righteousness. I was told that a good teacher repeats himself, and Paul seemed to be doing that. He provides us with the necessary information about God's righteousness, and it is my great pleasure to consider God's word with you this morning. We will consider each verse.

➤ **VERSE 21. RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED CLEARLY.**

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

- Paul began with these two small words, "but now." This is an indication that something new has happened, and Paul is going to contrast it with something he had already said. What has been Paul's message so far?
- First, Paul made the point that all men and women after the Fall are depraved. Everyone after Adam, in their natural, unconverted state, is under the power of sin. He wrote, "There is none righteous, no, not even one." The religious person is not righteous, the pagan, atheist is not righteous, the morally upright men and women are not righteous; all lacked the righteousness of God.
- Secondly, Paul stated that no one has ever attained God's righteousness by self-help. No number of religious rituals and traditions can bring God's righteousness to the person. No amount of fasting, prayer, tithing, evangelism, profession of

faith, religious education, building homes for the homeless, or feeding the orphans can enable the unconverted to attain God's righteousness. This means mankind is in a terrible situation, self-help is not an option, and we don't know where to find help.

- Up to this point in the Letter to the Romans, Paul has emphasized God's wrath and judgment for all, as all are guilty of sin and under condemnation. This would not have been a popular teaching among the Jews who had believed that by having the Law, by observing religious rituals like circumcision, they had acquired the righteousness of God. They believed that by keeping the Law, even though they couldn't do so perfectly, they had or would attain God's righteousness.
- However, the tone of this Letter completely changes with these two small words: "but now." What is the new development that Paul is contrasting with his earlier teaching? Why the change in Paul's tone? Paul says there is hope for mankind. There is a solution to the terrible situation of mankind. These two small words suggest that something has recently occurred, opening up a new possibility for humanity. This refers to the coming of the Son of God into the world, marking the great turning point in history. Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost mark a pivotal turning point in the salvation of mankind. After much talk of wrath and destruction, it seems like a relief to see that the Lord has provided righteousness and revealed it clearly to mankind.
- Unlike the righteousness that the Jews pursued by following the Law, Paul says that the true righteousness, the righteousness that saves, comes to anyone apart from the law or without the law. No one becomes righteous, nor is anyone saved, by attempting to keep the Law. Paul says the righteousness that saves comes apart from any earning and deserving merit before God. You don't gain this righteousness through the activities of men and women. We contribute nothing to attaining this righteousness. Good works are ruled out when you want to possess this righteousness. It is a salvation that is offered apart from the law, apart from our own earning and deserving, apart from our own merits. Then he gave some truths about God's righteousness.

**First:** It has now been revealed; it has been made known, seen clearly in Jesus Christ. Paul is saying that God's righteousness is not new; it has always been present in the Old Testament, but hidden in shadows, types, and so on, until the coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ made God's righteousness clearly seen, but it has always been there.

**Second:** The righteousness that saves is God's. It is God's righteousness, God's provision, God's plan. The gospel was planned before the world began. It is not an afterthought.

**Third:** Paul then stated that even the Old Testament testifies to the fact that it is not a new teaching, but rather something that has always been there. Both the Law and the Prophets, which are another expression of the Old Testament, speak about God's righteousness in Jesus Christ. The Old Testament pointed to this righteousness; the

Law and the Prophets looked forward to it. This means the 39 Books of the Old Testament speak about Jesus Christ. This righteousness is not a novelty. Paul didn't "invent" it. It was predicted long ago, as witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. The Old Testament prophesied that this righteousness would come.

- How did Abraham get his righteousness? At the time God called Abraham, the Law was not given, so how did God declare him righteous? We read in **Genesis 15:6 that "Abram believed the Lord, and He credited it to him as righteousness."**
- Abraham was credited with God's righteousness by believing in God and His promises, and not by keeping any laws. Even the first Book of the Bible, Genesis, makes the case that righteousness does not come to anyone by keeping any laws. No one would be saved by keeping any laws.
- In Luke 24:13-35, Luke records a conversation between two men on the road to Emmaus. They were talking to each other about everything that had happened, including Jesus' death and resurrection. **As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus Himself came up and walked along with them, but they were kept from recognizing Him. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?" They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked Him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" 19 "What things?" He asked. "About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. What did Jesus say to them as they narrated everything to Him? "He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself."**
- Jesus opened up the Old Testament to them, beginning with the Law and moving through to the Prophets, and He showed them that all the 39 Books are about Him and the righteousness He alone brings. So, you can't read your Old Testament without the Scripture pointing you to Jesus Christ.

➤ **VERSE 22 AND 23. THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IS AVAILABLE TO ALL.**

**22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**

- We live in a world where you have to work hard to get anything good for yourself. For most people, working hard on their education is essential to securing a better job. You must campaign hard to be elected to public office. Religious people often discuss their efforts to attain salvation through God. They believe that they are justified because of how long and many times they pray, how many times they fast, and how many times they share the gospel. The religious man and

woman love to talk about how many times they worship on Sundays and believe that they are justified because they feed the orphans, go to other nations to build homes for the homeless, and provide drinking water to poor nations. Mankind is accustomed to working hard to obtain something precious. However, the greatest blessing anyone could have is free. The most precious gift anyone could possess is free. The most precious thing men and women born in sin could have to escape hell is God's righteousness, and it's free for all who believe.

- The doctrine of the free gift of salvation was stated again in the last chapter of the Bible, in **Revelation 22:17**. "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let the one who hears say, 'Come!' Let the one who is thirsty come; and let the one who wishes take the free gift of the water of life." However, the proud man and woman would reject this free gift and prefer to work hard to attain their own righteousness, which leads to eternal suffering in hell.
- **How do we obtain the righteousness that we need to stand before God in His judgment?** Paul wrote: "22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

**FIRST: Righteousness comes to us not by any hard work on our part but by faith in Jesus Christ.**

- Faith in Christ is the condition by which anyone can have God's righteousness. Faith doesn't save anyone; it is Christ who saves. Our faith, therefore, must be in Christ.
- How do you get this faith? By repenting of your sins and believing in who Jesus Christ is and His work on the Cross for your sins. Faith is believing that Jesus Christ died for you and gave Himself for you because of love. Faith is believing that there was a divine exchange where Jesus Christ took upon Himself our sins and put His righteousness into our account. Faith is believing that God has declared you and me righteous because of Jesus Christ. True faith must include an awareness of the truth about Christ, an assent to that truth, and a commitment to oneself to the person of Christ.
- Faith is not merely intellectual knowledge or agreement, but requires a genuine trust in Him and in what He has done on our behalf. The person with faith no longer looks at himself or relies on personal righteousness but looks entirely to the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work, and he rests on that alone.
- The religious but unconverted, the pagan, the morally upright, and everyone have to repent and believe to receive God's righteousness. Some people put their faith in religious figures such as Mohammed, Buddha, and so on. Some also put their faith in their denomination, pastors, parents, education, job, their personalities, but none of these could bring them God's righteousness. Only the faith in Jesus Christ produces this righteousness.

## **SECOND: Righteousness is available to all who believe in Jesus Christ.**

- The keyword is all. It is available without racial distinction. The White person who truly repents and believes will have God's righteousness, and it is the same for the Black, Asian, Hispanic, European, Arabian, Indian, etc. It is available for the rich, poor, educated, uneducated, children, adults, and every class of humanity. God is the God of the whole world, not just the Jews. The righteousness is available to all. It is available to all because Paul tells us in **verse 23 that "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"**.
- True faith is produced in the man and woman who truly believes in Christ. Faith is only the instrument or the channel through which righteousness becomes ours, and faith comes only through the Lord Jesus Christ and all He has done for mankind.

### **➤ VERSE 24 – 26. RIGHTEOUSNESS IS JESUS CHRIST'S WORK.**

- How is God's righteousness different from the false righteousness that came from the Law? God's righteousness is centered on the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

**"24 and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 He did it to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus."**

**VERSE 24. "and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."**

- Paul says the sinner is freely justified, freely declared righteous in the court of God because of the redemption that came from Jesus Christ.
- **What is redemption?** Redemption implies the act of buying back something, and it involves a cost. It has a picture of someone being held captive, in bondage, and the captor had demanded an amount to be paid for the release of the captive. The word "redemption" had its origin in describing the release of prisoners of war on payment of a price and was known as the "ransom." As time went on, it was extended to include the freeing of slaves, again by the payment of a price.
- Men and women, after Adam, were born in sin. Sin holds us captive; we are under the power and slavery of sin. The Devil controls the unconverted man and woman. A ransom had to be paid to God to free the man and woman from the slavery of sin, under the captivity of the Devil. How do we pay this ransom? We can only pay with our lives by dying eternally for our sins. However, God pays the

cost, and so we are justified freely. Jesus bought us; therefore, we belong to Him. Paul expressed this thought in another letter: “For you were bought at a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20). Jesus Christ came in to pay the ransom for us with His own blood by His death on the Cross. This is our redemption. Our redemption came through Jesus Christ. Everyone who doesn’t believe in Jesus Christ is still held captive by sin and would die for their sin, but the true believer is redeemed.

**VERSE 25.** “25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement through the shedding of His blood, (whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood), —to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.”

- Paul now says that it is God, the Father, who presented Jesus Christ to die for sinners. It is God the Father who laid upon Jesus your sins and my sins. Christ’s death was not an accident but God’s deliberate action. His death on the cross on Calvary was not an accident. It was God who did it. It was a public act of God on the stage of world history, predetermined according to God’s eternal plan, not merely the result of human cruelty or misunderstanding.
- Jesus did not somehow appease a reluctant, unwilling Father to hold back His wrath. Instead, it was God the Father who initiated the propitiation, whom God set forth as the propitiation. Jesus’s death did not persuade God to forgive us or change His mind. God Himself provided the propitiation through Jesus’s blood.
- Prophet Isaiah writes, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” Isaiah 53:6.
- 1 John 4:9. “This is how God showed His love among us: He sent His one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him.”
- Romans 8:32. “He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?”
- John 3:16. “For 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.”
- Paul also wrote that “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood.” The Greek word Paul uses is *hilasterion*, which can best be translated as propitiation – meaning God’s wrath is satisfied. The word, in its classical form, was used to describe the act of appeasing the Greek gods through sacrifice. When you sin against the gods, a sacrifice is offered to appease the anger of the gods.
- Paul’s words would have instantly reminded his readers of the Day of Atonement or Yom Kippur (Leviticus 16). Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was to bathe and put on special garments. He must have a bull and two goats for the ceremony. He would then enter the Most Holy Place in the Temple with the sacrificial blood of the bull to offer sacrifices for his own sins and the blood of one of the goats for the sins of the people. The Most Holy Place housed

the Ark of the Covenant, which was a symbol of the holy presence of the enthroned God, depicted in the beautiful gold cherubim. In between the two stood the mercy seat, and as sacrificial blood of the bull and one of the goats was sprinkled on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement, God's wrath was averted because a substitute had been slain on behalf of sinners coming by faith.

- From between the cherubim, God looked down, but instead of seeing the broken Law, He saw the blood. Judgment was satisfied, His wrath was satisfied, and fellowship was restored for a year. Those sacrifices had to be repeated every year, because as the writer of Hebrews tells us, the blood of bulls and goats could never truly remove sin (Hebrews 10:3–4). They were a shadow pointing forward to the day when the true Lamb, Jesus Christ, would come (John 1:29).
- The other goat was used as a scapegoat. Aaron placed his hands on its head, confessed over it the rebellion and wickedness of the Israelites, and sent the goat out with an appointed man who released it into the wilderness. The goat carried on itself all the sins of the people, which were forgiven for another year.
- This was not a ceremony to be taken lightly, and the people were to understand that atonement for sin was to be done God's way, not as they wished. Sin is a serious thing, and the sinner must follow God's instructions to deal with it.
- Jesus came to make the "once for all" sacrifice, so that the need for cleansing ceremonies ceased (Hebrews 7:27). The blood of bulls and goats could only atone for sins if the ritual were continually done year after year, while Christ's sacrifice was sufficient for all the sins of all who would ever believe in Him. When His sacrifice was made, He declared, "It is finished" (John 19:30). He then sat down at the right hand of God, and no further sacrifice was ever needed (Hebrews 10:1–12). Jesus' blood turns aside God's wrath and restores our relationship with Him.
- Every year, an innocent animal died for the sins of the high priest and the people. The animals were substitutes for the sinners. In the same way, Jesus, by His death, by His blood, was our substitute sacrifice. As He was judged in our place, the Father could demonstrate His righteousness in judgment against sin, while sparing those who deserved the judgment. Jesus doesn't have to offer any sacrifices for His own sins year after year because He had none; He is God. Instead, He offered His own blood once for all (Hebrews 7:27; 9:11–14; 10:10–12). John Stott puts it well when he wrote, "God himself gave himself to save us from himself."
- The sufficiency and completeness of the sacrifice of Christ are also seen in the two goats. The blood of the first goat was sprinkled on the ark, ritually appeasing the wrath of God for another year. The second goat symbolically carried away the sins of the people into the wilderness, where they were forgotten and no longer clung to the people. Sin is both propitiated and expiated God's way—only by the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Propitiation is the act of appeasing the wrath of God, while expiation is the act of atoning for sin and removing it from the sinner. Both together are achieved eternally by Christ. When He sacrificed

Himself on the cross, He appeased God's wrath against sin, taking that wrath upon Himself. The removal of sin by the second goat was a living parable of the promise that God would remove our transgressions from us as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12) and that He would remember them no more (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17).

- Paul wrote that God passed over the sins of the Old Testament Saints. In verse 25, he wrote, **“because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.”** God, in His forbearance, had passed over the sins of those Old Testament saints who trusted in the coming Messiah. However, at the cross, those sins were no longer passed over; they were paid for. How were Abraham, Moses, David, and all the Old Testament saints saved? They were saved the same way as those of us in the New Testament are saved. They had faith in the coming Jesus, the future Messiah. God, in His patience, did not send them to hell, but saved them because of the faith they placed in the coming Jesus Christ.
- The idea is that through the animal sacrifice of the Old Testament, those who looked in faith to the coming Messiah had their sins covered. That temporary covering was redeemed for full payment at the cross. We look backward in faith to the Messiah who came, but they looked forward in faith to His coming. The work of Jesus on the cross freed God from the charge that He had lightly passed over sin committed before the cross. Those sins were passed over for a time but they were finally paid for. Christ's sacrifice is not just for sins before his time, but for all sins - past, present, and future. His sacrifice dealt with all sins once and for all.

**VERSE 26.** Paul wrote, **“That He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”**

- At the cross, God demonstrated that He is both a just God who punishes sin and, at the same time, the God who pardons sinners. He showed His righteousness by offering man justification, declaring Him “not guilty”, while remaining completely just, because the righteous penalty of sin had been paid at the cross. God can find a way to be both just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus.

#### ➤ **APPLICATIONS**

- Where do you stand in light of God's word to us this morning? The righteous God demands righteousness from us, but we do not have it; we don't know where to find it. Paul tells us that there is good news, that God Himself has provided the righteousness He demands from us in Jesus Christ.
- He has provided only one way to attain righteousness in Jesus Christ, and it is by repenting of your sins and believing in who Jesus Christ is as the appointed

Savior and what He has done for you and for me. By doing this, God creates faith only in Jesus Christ within you. You don't gain faith by inviting Jesus into your heart; instead, you gain faith by repenting of your sins and believing in Jesus Christ. True faith must be focused on Jesus Christ alone.

- Where do you stand in light of this message? While you might escape the punishment of your evil deeds from law enforcement, you can't escape hell if you remain in your unrighteousness, if you continue to reject God's righteousness and the means He has given to attain it. Proverbs 15:3 tells us that "**The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.**" God is omnipresent; His eyes are everywhere watching over our actions and mine. If you are not yet a true believer, your many sins are before Him right now. Your evil thoughts, words, and actions, all before Him, and He will judge each of them.
- However, if you have truly repented of your sins and genuinely believed the gospel, God not only sees your many sins, but He also sees the penalty Christ has paid for your many sins, and He will declare you not guilty of hell because of Christ's work.
- It is wisdom to humble yourself before God and accept His means of salvation through Jesus Christ. If you are here and still not converted, but trusting that your good deeds and religious activities can give you peace with God, then I am warning you to stop trying any other means to restore a relationship with God. No one can come to God in the way they want, but only through Jesus Christ, whom the ancient people looked forward to for their salvation, and we also look back to for our salvation.
- May the Lord grant us the grace to hunger for God and live for Him all the rest of our earthly life.
- May our relationship with God be the only important thing in our lives.