

Romans 3.21-31

First Thoughts

1. What would you want to be if you could 'grow up' all over again? or, If you could be anything you wanted to be, what would you choose?
2. Do you believe that you could accomplish anything with the right combination of hard work, luck, and determination?

Into the Passage

Read Romans 3:21-31

3. What has been happening up to this point in the chapter? How does Jesus Christ come into the picture in vs 21 - 22?
4. Would you consider it good news or bad news that there is no distinction in how God views us all (v22 - 23)? Why?
5. What does it mean to fall short of the glory of God?
6. How does God's gift of grace show his righteousness as stated in vs 24 - 26? Can someone be both merciful and just?
7. Why do you think there is no room for "boasting" or "being self-made" in the law of faith (v27)? How does this new law compare to the old one?
8. Verse 28 states that we are justified outside works of the old law. Would this be a relief or responsibility? Why can we not be justified under the law?
9. At the end of this chapter Paul brings back the old Jew versus Gentile argument. Is there still a distinction between the two? How does the old law fit into the new law of faith?

Moving Forward

10. How might the knowledge that we are all equal in God's eyes be a relief? a burden?
11. How might it influence the way you relate to the world and nonbelievers? Discuss.

Life Together

Part of being a cell group is developing honest and authentic community where we are able to support one another in trust.

12. What does the grace of God mean to you personally? Share your experience of it? Do you still live like you remember that gift of grace?
13. Share and pray.

Romans 3:21-31 - Some Leader's Notes

These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Don't place too much focus on them, and let the Bible study discussion lead primarily from the passage itself.

And MAKE SURE you have PLENTY of time at the end to share and pray for one another. OK?

Into the Passage

Read Romans 3:21-31

3. What has been happening up to this point in the chapter? How does Jesus Christ come into the picture in vs 21 - 22?

Up until now Paul has systematically talked about God's wrath, judgement, mankind's fallenness, and that God judges the heart, not just the outward signs (such as Circumcision). And then in verse 21 & 22 he introduces Jesus Christ – the Righteousness of God. A Righteousness that comes apart from the Law. In other words, a perfection that not only fulfils the law, but a righteousness through Jesus Christ that is transferrable to all who believe by faith.

4. Would you consider it good news or bad news that there is no distinction in how God views us all (v22 - 23)? Why?

It is altogether humbling to realise that there is no distinction by the way God views us all. Modern man needs to categorise, stereotype, put people in boxes, label, and pigeon-hole others, simply because we cannot cope with knowing each person individually and wholly. Because of that our minds are forced to draw generalisations based on dress, culture, race, attitudes. God, however, in his omniscience, knows each one specifically and intimately, and does not need to generalise. It is a humbling proposition. But whether it is good news or bad news? It's good news because it means that he is all knowing. It's bad news because I am now judged by his truth and perfection. I am not saved by my race or religion, but by faith in Christ alone.

5. What does it mean to fall short of the glory of God?

I still think understanding the glory of God as absolute truth is better than describing it as coming second in a race or an exam. A race and an exam are reliant on us, on our own standards and preparation. But when we consider God as truth, absolute truth, it then means any bit of falsehood or deceit cannot stand in the face of truth. It will always be caught out. To fall short of God means that we are people who are not absolutely pure & truthful.

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6. How does God's gift of grace show his righteousness as stated in vs 24 - 26? Can someone be both merciful and just?

If then, we are confronted with absolute truth – and are subject to judgement based on that standard, we're pretty much screwed right? We aren't anywhere near that perfection. So the grace of God, is to provide a way for us to be brought into the truth – which means somehow our deceit (or corruption) must be paid for. Justification is not justifying our behaviour – no the justification of God means that we are brought into God's truth. And in verse 24-26 this is done by the blood of Jesus. It is completely by grace, not by our goodness, or our rights. Grace is the exhibition of God's mercy in the light of his perfect justice.

7. Why do you think there is no room for “boasting” or “being self-made” in the law of faith (v27)? How does this new law compare to the old one?

Are you kidding me? Like Paul says, I can boast in no one but Christ. Live and saved by him alone. The new law (the law of faith), means that the knowledge of Christ (as the Son of God) and the realisation of his sacrifice to save us, means that the old law is fulfilled in Him. The old law illuminates how far we are from perfection. And the new law gives us a way to be brought into that perfection.

8. Verse 28 states that we are justified outside works of the old law. Would this be a relief or responsibility? Why can we not be justified under the law?

It's a relief. Because if it was up to me, or my standard, I wouldn't be able to do it. (And Paul will later go on to talk about why we stop sinning then). The law finds itself absolute – you're either up to the standard or you're not.

9. At the end of this chapter Paul brings back the old Jew versus Gentile argument. Is there still a distinction between the two? How does the old law fit into the new law of faith?

Paul is very distinct in saying that God's plan of salvation is for the Jew & the non-Jew. And yes, Jews are still different from Gentiles. The fact that the Jews know the law means that they actually have a special understanding in their relationship with God. It is something to be treasured and lived – not something to be discarded. And for us Gentiles, we too then seek the law of God in our hearts, not so that we become Jews, but so we too know how to live as we have been called.