

Has anyone yet become clean "from all your sins ... before the LORD"? No, not yet. On no day of atonement, (which is the 10th day of the 7th month on the biblical calendar), was anyone perfected. And if you study the sacrifices for days of atonement past, you will see that they were for the physical cleansing of the sanctuary from the contamination of Israel's transgressions. What happened to the transgressions? They were symbolically put on the second goat and carried into the wilderness – to await their pardon by Christ on the cross and to await their final cleansing in the eschatological day of atonement.

So there remains yet a future day of atonement which will come when God will complete cleansing us from all our sins. In that day we will be perfected, at the last trumpet, in the twinkling of an eye.⁵⁶ For the great Jubilee trumpet will be sounded and we shall be free of our sin nature, and indeed, the whole land of Israel with us:

KJV Zechariah 3:9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone *shall be* seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

The Heart of the Gospel: Romans 3

Let us now turn to the heart of the gospel in Romans 3:19-31. The corrections that we discussed earlier in this book are implemented throughout the following translations.

Rom 3:19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those with the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may come under justice before God.

The law brings the whole world under God's justice. It is the law that makes the world liable to judgment for committing sin. The text says, "it says to those with the law", and not "under the law" as most translations read. The Greek ἐν τῷ νόμῳ actually means "with the law" and not "under the law" which require the words ὑπὸ τὸν νόμον. It seems that the Authorized Version translators only wanted the law to be speaking to those "under the law" rather than "with the law". Paul's context rules out such

⁵⁶ 1st Cor. 15:52.

equivocation over the application of the law. He applies it to the whole world.

Rom 3:20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be acquitted in His sight, for by the law [is] the full knowledge of sin.

The text could just as well read "justified" instead of "acquitted". However, I have put acquitted to emphasize the judicial idea of the word. The second definition of δικαιόω in Bauer's Lexicon is "to render a favorable verdict, *vindicate ... be free of charges ... be acquitted*"⁵⁷. The word's "in His sight" underscore the judicial sense of the context. No flesh will *satisfy justice* by deeds of the law.

Rom 3:21 But now the justice of God apart from the norm is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

The normal application of the law's justice is when the sinner is put to death to pay the penalty for his own sin. But the law also teaches that a sacrificial substitute can satisfy the penalty, making an exception to the precept that the sinner die for his own sin. This extraordinary justice through an atoning sacrifice is according to the law. Therefore, we cannot say it is apart from the law's teaching. Indeed, Paul says it is "witnessed by the Law and the Prophets." The Greek insight here is that by νόμος Paul is distinguishing this extraordinary *justice* from the *norm* of the law, and not from the teaching of the law. (The primary meaning of *nomos*, errantly translated "law" in this text, is *a norm*).

Rom 3:22 even the justice of God, through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ, to all and on all who firmly trust. For there is no difference;

Here "justice" translates the first definition of δικαιοσύνη as we explained before, and "faithfulness of" the first definition of πίστις. And the word "of" agrees with the Authorized Version and the most common sense of the Greek grammar.⁵⁸ The justice being described is the sacrificial justice apart from the norm of the law from the preceding verse. This justice is "through Jesus' faithfulness" to the Father's plan to lay down his life as the

⁵⁷ BDAG, pg. 249, 3rd edition, 2000.

⁵⁸ It is hard to know which is more remarkable, the fact that the truth can be recovered in terms of the primary definitions of the words, or the fact that corruption and ignorance among Christian scholars has succeeded in suppressing it for so long.

sacrifice for our transgressions. Finally, the end of the text places a condition on receiving the benefits of Christ's sacrifice. We must "firmly trust" Him by committing our lives to him.

Rom 3:23-24 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, having justice done freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

The text is plain once the key phrase is corrected to the actual meaning of the Greek: *having justice done*. In the light of the context Paul is speaking of *justice* apart from the works of the law. Therefore, it is unlikely that he has *made righteous* in mind, because the deeds of the law are connected with our sanctification. Nor is it likely that he means *declared righteous*, because such a declaration could not be apart from the obeying the law.⁵⁹

Rom 3:25 whom God set forth [as] a propitiation by His blood, through the faith, to demonstrate His justice, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

The word "propitiation" means "atonement". Atonement is from the Hebrew word *kippur* which means to "wipe away"⁶⁰. In this context the penalty is wiped away by substitutionary sacrifice.

It is possible that instead of "the faith" the text should read "through faithfulness" meaning Christ's faithfulness. Otherwise, "the faith" refers to biblical religion by itself. The last phrase about the sins "passed over" refers

⁵⁹ Even *trust* in God is commanded in the law: KJV Deuteronomy 6:5 "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." It is impossible to love God without trusting Him.

⁶⁰ There has been some debate over the meaning of this word. Typically, it is explained to mean *cover* while others explain it to mean *blot out, or expiate*. Recent scholarship has shown that the latter definition is correct by comparing *kippur* to its Akkadian cognate "*wipe off*" < *kuppuru*. The word *cover* does not quite explain the whole meaning of this word. English *cover* can leave us with the incorrect sense that something is covered over and that it still exists underneath. Substitutionary *atonement* or *propitiation* is directed toward *wiping away* the wrath of God, that penalty for sin. Animal offerings were often used for *wiping away* physical ritual impurity in the Temple or a penalty for sin. In the case of penalty, it is canceled. In the case of ritual impurity, it is cleansed away, not just whitewashed or covered. One mistaken idea one might get from "cover" is to suppose that the penalty of sin is temporarily "covered" by atonement leaving a further need for expiation of the penalty later. On the contrary, the penalty is *wiped off* God's books never to be found again.

to the transgressions of Israel which were put on the head of the scapegoat on Yom Kippur and sent into the wilderness. These transgressions were put out of the way so that Israel could have relief in the promise that God would dispose of them. The penalty for the transgressions was suspended or "passed over" by God until Christ atoned for them.⁶¹

Rom 3:26 to demonstrate at the present time His justice, that He might be just and the one doing justice to one by the faithfulness of Jesus.

Rom 3:27-29 Where [is] boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faithfulness. Therefore we conclude that a man has justice done by faithfulness apart from the deeds of the law.

This is the passage where the famous "justified by faith" phrase used in the creeds comes from. But we know what it means now--God's "justice-is-applied by [Christ's] faithfulness," or to use more lexical language, *a man satisfies justice by the faithfulness of Christ*. And this *faithfulness* is apart from the man's *deeds of the law*. By no means does the phrase mean "declared righteous by [our] faith or faithfulness apart from the deeds of the law". James makes it quite clear that Abraham was counted righteous because of his works. What Paul speaks of is the *justice* of Christ's sacrifice being imputed to our account without our works.

Rom 3:29-31 Or [is He] the God of the Jews only? [Is He] not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since [there is] one God who will have justice done to the circumcised by faithfulness and the uncircumcised through the faith. Do we then make void the law through the faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

Paul can justly say that he upholds the law, or *Torah and Prophets* in every way. He has not allowed the sinner to be acquitted. He has not allowed our works to be part of the atonement. Nor has he declared the wicked righteous, but his teaching centers around God's justice being done to the sinner in Christ by his substitutionary sacrifice. And Paul has established his thesis that the just shall live by faithfulness, which means Christ's faithfulness firstly, and then it results in our faithfulness.

⁶¹ The Temple Sacrifices atone for sins of ignorance, but not the transgressions and iniquities. No offering is made directly for transgression except the offering of Christ.

Navigating Romans 4

Romans 4 is an especially difficult passage in the English because it seems to contradict James statement that faith without works is dead. However, the misunderstanding can be corrected with the three Greek roots we have been discussing: (a) *dikaioo*, *dikaiosune*, (b) *pisteuo*, *pistis*, (c) *nomos*.

Rom 4:1-3 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For when Abraham was just by works, he has [something] to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham firmly trusted in⁶² God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Abraham, or any other believer is entitled to feel good about good works. Indeed, Paul even goes so far as to suggest that Abraham could boast (he does not say Abraham did boast). He only denies that Abraham can boast to God. Why does Paul say this? Because Abraham *firmly trusted in God*. Now if you trust in God, then you entrust your life to him, and he becomes the source of your righteousness. If God gives it to us, then how can we boast to God? It wouldn't make any sense to boast back to the Father after he has given you a gift. To *firmly trust in God* means the same thing as *to rely on God*. That's why Abraham could not take credit for his righteousness to God. Because God gets the ultimate credit. Abraham is crediting God as his Saviour and Sustainer by trusting in Him. And that is why God was willing to recognize his trust as righteousness.

Rom 4:4-6 Now to him who earns⁶³, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not earn, but faithfully trusts on Him who does justice to the ungodly, His faithfulness is reckoned for justice, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes justice⁶⁴ apart from works:

In the context, Paul speaks of the one who works toward an acquittal

⁶² Hebrew "stood fast in" (Abraham's loyalty to God was counted as righteousness because it was righteousness to be loyal).

⁶³ = do business, trade, cut a deal, work out a deal. BDAG lists *work for/earn* under definition 2e, page, 389, 3rd edition, ἐργάζομαι.

⁶⁴ = the justice of God done to Christ is reckoned to our account (he paid the penalty for us). Imputes means "counted".