

Notes on the Greek New Testament Day 197 – July 16th – Romans 3:9-31

Works frequently referenced in these notes on Romans

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Dunn, JDG	<i>Romans</i> , Word Biblical Commentary Vols 38A, 38B, Dallas, Word, 1988.
Moo, Douglas, J	<i>Romans: The NIV Application Commentary</i> , Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2000.
Murray, John	<i>The Epistle to the Romans</i> , 2 Vols, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1959 & 1965.
Wright, NT	<i>The Letter to The Romans</i> , The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol 10, Nashville, Abingdon Press, 2002.

Verse 9

Τί οὖν; προεχόμεθα; οὐ πάντως,
προητιασάμεθα γὰρ Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἕλληνας
πάντας ὑφ' ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι,

προερχομαι go ahead, go before

προερχομαι is ambiguous and could be:
i) Middle voice meaning 'offer an excuse';
ii) Middle voice with active meaning, 'are we better off';
iii) Passive voice, 'are we bettered', i.e. 'are we worse off'.

The words that follow give no clue since they emphasise the fact that Jew and Greek are on the same footing. This ambiguity led some copyists to replace προεχομεθα with the unambiguous προκατεχομεν. Most commentators and translators prefer meaning ii above.

παντως by all means; οὐ π. not at all, by no means

Some argue that this is a weaker negative than Paul's commonly used μη γενοιτο. The sense could be, 'not entirely' since Paul has granted that the Jews do have *some* privileges (so Cranfield). Moo, however, thinks that such a distinction is not intended and that the sense is 'not at all.' Wright agrees.

προητιασάμεθα Verb, aor midd dep indic, 1 pl προαιτιασομαι accuse beforehand
τε enclitic particle and, and so; τε και and also

Ἕλληνα, ἡνος m a Greek, non-Jew
ἁμαρτια, ας f sin

More than just 'commit sin.' May imply 'under sin's power/dominion,' cf. Gal 3:22. "For Paul, then, the human plight is not that people commit sins or even that they are in the habit of committing sins. The problem is that people are helpless prisoners of sin." Moo.

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἶμι

This forms Paul's conclusion to his extended argument concerning human sin and God's wrath in 1:18-3:8.

Verse 10

καθὼς γέγραπται ὅτι Οὐκ ἔστιν δίκαιος οὐδὲ εἷς,

γέγραπται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γραφω

There follows a series of quotations from the Old Testament which demonstrate the universal sinfulness of mankind – "the longest such series in the New Testament." Moo. In their original contexts, most of these quotations focus upon wicked or unrighteous people distinguished from the writer and other righteous in Israel (the possible exception being the quotation from Isaiah in vv 15-17). Moo writes, "Some scholars think this proves that Paul is referring in these quotations only to unrighteous Jews. But a more likely explanation is that Paul deliberately chose to take his words from these contexts in order to make a subtle, but important point: in the light of Christ, all Jews must now be considered to be in the category of the 'wicked.' The original readers of Romans would be well aware that the words of Paul apply only to the wicked, and they may well have wondered at first about how Paul can apply them to all Jews. But then they would realise the rhetorical point that Paul is making: All Jews (along with all Gentiles) are 'unrighteous.'" Wright thinks that Paul's key point is summed up in v. 19. "The biblical quotations come from Israel's Scriptures and are themselves indictments, not of pagans, but of Jews. Scripture itself, in other words, bears witness against those to whom it was entrusted, leaving the whole world accountable to God (cf. 10:19-21)."

The language of vv.10b-12 is taken from Ps. 14:1-3, cf. also Ps 53:1-3.

δικαιος, α, ον righteous, just, conforming to the standard

Paul uses the word δικαιος here rather than following the OT text, 'there is no one who does good.' "A few commentators think that the change is because Paul is also alluding to Ecclesiastes 7:20: 'There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.' But the importance of 'righteous' language in this part of Romans makes it more likely that Paul himself has introduced this change to tailor the quotation more closely to its context." Moo.

εἷς, μια, ἓν gen ἑνός, μιας, ἑνός one, a, an, single

Verse 11

οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ συνίων, οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ ἐκζητῶν τὸν θεόν·

συνίων Verb, pres act ptc, m nom s συνιημι understand, comprehend
ἐκζητεῶ seek or search diligently

Verse 12

πάντες ἐξέκλιναν, ἅμα ἠχρεώθησαν· οὐκ ἔστιν ποιῶν χρηστότητα, οὐκ ἔστιν ἕως ἑνός.

πάντες Adjective, m nom pl πας
ἐξέκλιναν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl ἐκκλινω turn away, turn aside
ἅμα at the same time, together
ἠχρεώθησαν Verb, aor pass dep indic, 3 pl ἀχρειοομαι be worthless, debased

A word used to describe food which has gone off.

χρηστοτης, ητος f kindness, goodness, mercy

The second οὐκ ἔστιν is absent from several witnesses.

It is worth noting the wider context from which Paul quotes these words. Pss 14/53 end in a prayerful longing that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion and that God would restore the fortunes of his people, making Israel glad. This, as Paul goes on to explain, is what God has done in Jesus.

Verse 13

τάφος ἀνεωγμένος ὁ λάρυγξ αὐτῶν, ταῖς γλώσσαις αὐτῶν ἐδολιοῦσαν, ἰδὸς ἀσπίδων ὑπὸ τὰ χεῖλη αὐτῶν,

Verses 13-14 focus on sins of speech and take their origin from Pss 5:9; 140:3b and 10:7. These latter two psalms also plead with the Lord to act to judge the wicked and establish his kingdom.

τάφος, ου m grave, tomb

ἀνεωγμένος Verb, per pass ptc, m nom s ἀνοιγω open

λάρυγξ, γγος m throat

γλωσσα, ης f tongue, language, utterance

ἐδολιοῦσαν Verb, imperf act indic, 3 pl

δολιοω deceive, be treacherous

ἰος, ου m poison, venom, rust

ἄσπις, ἰδος f snake

χειλος, ους n lip

Verse 14

ᾧ τὸ στόμα ἄραξ καὶ πικρίας γέμει·

στομα, τος n mouth, utterance

ἄρα, ας f cursing, curse(s)

πικρια, ας f bitterness, spite

γεμω be full, be covered with

Verse 15

ὄξεις οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν ἐκχέει αἷμα,

Verses 15-17 concentrate on sins of violence using quotations from Is 59:7-8a with a possible allusion to Prov 1:16.

Wright comments concerning Isaiah 59, "Of all the chapters in the Hebrew Scriptures, this is the one that most strikingly depicts YHWH discovering that there is no righteousness to be had in the world, and so putting on the clothes of righteousness and salvation to rescue the covenant people and judge their adversaries (59:16-18). The chapter ends with YHWH coming to Zion as redeemer – a passage Paul will quote in 11:26 – and establishing the divine covenant with Israel, putting the divine spirit within them."

ὄξυς, εια, υ sharp, swift

πους, ποδος m foot

ἐκχέει Verb aor act infin ἐκχεω and

ἐκχυννω pour out, shed (blood)

αἷμα, ατος f blood

Verse 16

σύντριμμα καὶ ταλαιπωρία ἐν ταῖς ὁδοῖς αὐτῶν,

συντριμμα, τος n ruin, destruction

ταλαιπωρια, ας f misery, trouble

ὁδος, ου f way, path

Verse 17

καὶ ὁδὸν εἰρήνης οὐκ ἔγνωσαν.

εἰρηνη, ης f peace

ἔγνωσαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl γινωσκω

Cf. Lk 19:42.

Verse 18

οὐκ ἔστιν φόβος θεοῦ ἀπέναντι τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν αὐτῶν.

A concluding indictment of all humankind quoting Ps 36:1b.

φοβος, ου m fear

ἀπεναντι prep with gen opposite, before

It is this last sin which is the root of all that precedes it. Again, Wright argues that the entire psalm is significant. It "moves on to a paean of praise of God's mercy and faithfulness (36:5), God's righteousness and judgments (v. 6) and ends with a prayer for God's mercy and righteousness to abide with Israel and for the wicked to be judged at last (36:10-12)." He continues, commenting on Paul's string of quotations above, "What looked at first like a repetitious list of biblical quotations, apparently labouring the point that all are deeply wicked, turns out to be a subtle sequence of thought, linking in at virtually every point with the themes from Paul's surrounding argument. The surface meaning of the text is clear, that all who are 'under the law' are condemned as sinners; but the subtext is saying all the time, 'Yes; and in precisely this situation God will act, to rescue the helpless, to establish the covenant.'"

Verse 19

Οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὅσα ὁ νόμος λέγει τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λαλεῖ, ἵνα πᾶν στόμα φραγῆ καὶ ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ.

ὅσος, η, ου as much as, whatever

τοῖς ἐν τῷ νομῷ To whom does this refer?

There are two basic views:

- i) Jews (Ridderbos). The Jews to whom Paul refers thought that they alone were free from the judgement of the law. Paul proves that the Jew is condemned by the law and hence it follows that all the world is under its condemnation.
- ii) The whole world (Murray). The curious phrase ἐν τῷ νομῷ may be understood by way of contrast with the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ. The whole world, and each person in it, is characterised by being either ἐν νομῷ and thereby under the law's condemnation, or ἐν Χριστῷ and thereby being justified in him.

Moo favours the former interpretation saying, "Paul knows full well that the most difficult case he has to prove is that Jews, who are recipients of God's revelation and covenant blessing, are sinners accountable to God. By proving from the Old Testament, then, that Jews are condemned, Paul feels it legitimate to extend that verdict to all people." See also the argument of Wright, above.

στομα, τος n mouth

φραγῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s φρασσω
silence, muzzle, stop

ὑπόδικος, ου answerable to, exposed to
the judgement of

γένηται Verb, aor subj, 3 s γινομαι

Verse 20

διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιοθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας.

Moo discusses the various views regarding the role of lawkeeping in Jewish first century thought and the consequent meaning of the term 'justify.' He takes a 'middle view' saying, "We conclude, then, that Paul in verse 20 is combating what we might call a 'syncretistic' view of salvation that seems to have been widespread in first century Judaism. God, in his covenant, had provided the basis for salvation. But the individual Jew could be saved only by faithfully doing the law in response to God's covenant election. In Romans 2 Paul shows that Jews cannot depend on their covenant for salvation, so that they cannot be put right with God by doing the law. Their 'works' are now in the same category as that of the Gentiles – unable to secure salvation because of the pervasive power of sin."

διότι because, for, therefore

Should probably be translated 'because' – it gives the reason for v.19 not a conclusion drawn from it.

δικαιοθήσεται Verb, fut pass indic, 3pl

δικαιωω justify, acquit, declare & treat
as righteous

σαρξ, σαρκος f flesh, human nature

Wright argues that the term 'flesh' is a loaded one in Paul's thought: "It designates ... humankind as physically corruptible and morally rebellious, heading for death in both senses."

ἐνώπιον prep with gen before

Cf. Ps. 143:2b.

ἐπίγνωσις, εως f knowledge, recognition,
consciousness

ἁμαρτια, ας f sin

Summing Up

Here I quote from Wright's summing up of these verses: "What, then, does Paul mean, 'by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified before God'? How does this relate to 2:13, where 'the doers of the law' shall be justified?"

...

"When Paul uses this language he has three interlocking spheres of reference in mind. The language most naturally belongs in the lawcourt; the overarching concept in Paul's mind is God's covenant with Israel, the covenant through which (as though in a cosmic lawcourt) the world will be put to rights. And the critical turn in the argument is eschatological: Paul's affirmation that the final lawcourt scene has been brought forward into the present, that the divine 'righteousness' has been disclosed already in Jesus the Messiah. "Put simply, then, Paul's point is that the verdict of the court, i.e., of God, cannot be that those who have 'works of Torah' on their record will receive the verdict 'righteous.' We remind ourselves again that he is not speaking of Gentiles here, but of Jews; we already know, from 1:18-2:16, that Gentiles will not be justified as they stand. 'The Jew' of 2:17 will come into court, metaphorically speaking, and 'rest in the Torah,' producing 'works of the Torah'; these, it will be claimed, demonstrate that he or she is indeed a member of Israel, part of God's covenant people. No, says Paul. To cite one's possession of Torah as support will not do. Torah will simply remind you that you are a sinner like the Gentiles. That was the point of the hints in 1:18-2:16 and of the direct charge in 2:17-29 – not, as is sometimes said, that Jews are 'legalists,' but that they have broken the law they were given. And transgression of Torah shows that Jews, like Gentiles, are 'under the power of sin' (3:9). To appeal to Torah is like calling a defence witness who endorses what the prosecution has been saying all along. (This is the point that Paul will develop, via such apparently throwaway lines as 5:20, in 7:7-25; cf. too 1 Cor 15:56.)..."

"One of the great gains of the last quarter of a century in Pauline scholarship has been to recognise that Paul's contemporaries – and Paul himself prior to his conversion – were not 'legalists,' if by that we mean that they were attempting to earn favour with God, to earn grace as it were, by the performance of law-prescribed works. Paul's fellow Jews were not proto-Pelagians, attempting to pull themselves up by their moral shoelaces. They were, rather, responding out of gratitude to the God who had chosen and called Israel to be covenant people and who had given Israel the law both as the sign of that covenant membership and the means of making it real. Paul's critique is not that the Torah was a bad thing that the Jews should not have followed, nor that their Torah-observance was done in order to stake a claim on God that God had not already granted in the covenant. His point, rather, was that all who attempted to legitimate their covenant status by appealing to possession of Torah would find that the Torah itself accused them of sin. If 'the Jew' appealed to Torah to say 'This shows that I am different from the Gentiles,' Torah itself, according to Paul, would say 'No it doesn't; it shows that you are the same as the Gentiles.' "The 'works' that were regarded in Paul's day as particularly demonstrating covenant membership were, of course, those that marked out the Jews from their pagan neighbours, not least in the diaspora: the sabbath, the food laws and circumcision. A strong case can therefore be made for seeing 'works of the law,' in Romans and Galatians, as highlighting these elements in particular."

Verses 21-26

"Rarely does the Bible bring together in so few verses so many important theological ideas: the righteousness of God, justification, the shift in salvation history, faith, sin, redemption, grace, propitiation, forgiveness, and the justice of God. Here, more than anywhere else in Romans, Paul explains why Christ's coming means 'good news' for needy sinful people." Moo.

Verse 21

Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ
πεφανέρωται, μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου
καὶ τῶν προφητῶν,

Paul now resumes the theme of 1:17. What God has done for us in Christ is now described with the aid of images from the world of the law courts (justify), commerce (redeem) and religious ceremony (calling on the sacrificial rites of the Old Testament).

νυνὶ (originally an emphatic form of νῦν)
now

Moo cites a number of instances of similar significant use of νυνὶ δὲ from the pages of the NT (see pp. 133,134). The contrast is between OT and NT and the 'now' which changes the whole picture is the advent of the redemptive work of God in Christ and the corresponding revelation in him, cf. 1 Cor 15:20; Eph 2:13; Col 1:22. "Christ's coming announces a decisive shift in salvation history." Moo. The focus of the 'but now' is upon an objective act of God rather than a change in the believer's experience.

Wright similarly comments, "'But now' – commentators and preachers love to roll this vintage Pauline phrase around the palate. Expressing both logical and temporal transition, it carries all the flavour of Paul's inexhaustible excitement at what God had done in Jesus the Messiah. It was, after all, news: not a new religion, nor a new ethic, but an event through which the world, Paul himself, and the situation described in 3:19-20 had been changed forever. It was the new wine that had burst the old bottles once and for all."

χωρὶς prep with gen without, apart from

"Some people think that Paul is saying that God has made known a new kind of righteousness – one that is 'apart from law,' that is, a righteousness not based on the law (The NIV translation suggests this interpretation). But it fits Paul's focus on salvation history better to take the phrase with the verb 'make known'; note the NAB rendering, that 'the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law.' 'Law,' then, as usually in Paul, refers to the Mosaic law." Moo.

The law had erected a barrier against the Gentiles. This new work of God breaks that barrier down.

δικαιοσύνη, ἧς f righteousness, what is right, what God requires

δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται is more than a righteousness 'from God'; it is God's demonstration of his own righteousness. "In other words, that for which the prophets (particularly Isaiah) and the psalmists longed had come to pass. God had unveiled the covenant plan, had drawn back the curtain on the grand design; and this had been done, not in the sense merely of communicating information, but in action, as had always been promised. 'Revelation' here means more than just the passing on of knowledge, important though that is as well; it means the unveiling of God through a historical event. Though it would not be strictly accurate, it would not be a very great hyperbole to say that, for Paul, 'the righteousness of God' was one of the titles of Jesus the Messiah himself. God's saving justice walked around Galilee, announced the kingdom, died on a cross, and rose again. God's plan of salvation had always required a faithful Israelite to fulfil it. Now, at last, God had provided one." Wright.

φανερω make known, reveal
μαρτυρω bear witness, testify

This new work of God is that to which all Scripture bears witness and in which it finds its fulfilment.

Verse 22

δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας, οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν διαστολή.

πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief

πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ Many scholars prefer to understand this as a subjective genitive, 'through the faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ.' Moo thinks this is an attractive option but thinks the objective sense more likely.

Wright, on the other hand, argues that "Though the phrase could mean 'through faith in Jesus the Messiah,' the entire argument of the section strongly suggests that it is Jesus' own πίστις (*pistis*) that is spoken of and that the word here means 'faithfulness,' not 'faith.' ... The point here is that Jesus has offered to God, at last, the faithfulness Israel had denied (3:2-3)..."

"A further reason why πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ... here is likely to refer to Jesus' own faithfulness is that, if taken instead to refer to the faith Christians have 'in' Jesus the next phrase ('for all who believe') becomes almost entirely redundant." Cf. 1:17; Gal 3:22.

Some MSS read ἐπι παντας rather than εἰς παντας and this gave rise in turn to the conflate reading εἰς παντας και ἐπι παντας in the TR.

πιστευω believe (in), have faith (in)
διαστολη, ἧς f distinction, difference

I.e. between Jew and Gentile. Just as there is no difference regarding their plight, so there is no difference regarding its remedy.

Verse 23

πάντες γὰρ ἡμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ,

ἁμαρτανῶ sin, commit sin

Some suggest that the aorist here points back to a particular event, i.e. Adam's sin. So Wright, who argues that this is supported by the following verb: "Here the tense is present, the continuing result of a past event. In Jewish literature of the period, losing God's glory is closely associated with the fall of Adam, just as the sense of regaining Adam's glory is one of the key features of the expected salvation."

ὑστεροῦνται Verb, pres midd/pass indic, 3 pl
ὑστερεῶ lack, fall short of
δόξα, ἡς f glory

The term δόξης του θεου is variously interpreted. It is probably best to see it as a reference to that glory which should have marked humankind made in the image of God, a glory which is fully revealed only in the man Christ Jesus but which, through him, shall yet be ours, cf. Rom 8:18.

Verse 24

δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ·

δικαιοῶ justify, acquit, declare & treat as righteous

The participle here is rather abrupt. It may be best to view vv 22b-23 as parenthetical (so Moo and also Wright).

Cf. 8:30 where justification and glory are again linked. "This 'justification' takes place in the present, rather than in the future as in 2:1-11. This particular 'justification' is the surprising anticipation of the final verdict spoken of in that passage, and carries both the lawcourt meaning that we would expect from the sustained metaphor of 3:9, 19-20, and the covenantal meaning that we would expect from 2:17-3:8... It is God's declaration that those who believe are in the right; their sins have been dealt with; they are God's true covenant people, God's renewed humanity." Wright.

Paul then provides a threefold explanation of how this has happened, given that God is a righteous judge: this justification happens –

- i) 'freely'
- ii) 'by God's grace'
- iii) 'through the redemption that is in the Messiah, Jesus.'

The last of these is then explained more fully.

δωρεάν adv without cost, freely

It is neither deserved or paid for.

χάριτι Noun, dat s χάρις, ιτος f grace, unmerited favour

δωρεάν τῆ αὐτοῦ χάριτι a double emphasis on the unmerited character of God's justifying act. "Grace' is one of Paul's most potent shorthand terms, carrying in its beautiful simplicity the entire story of God's love, active in Christ and the Spirit to do for humans what they could not do for themselves... God does not, so to speak, have to be persuaded that Jesus' death makes a good enough case for sinners to be justified. It was God who initiated the movement in the first place" Wright.

ἀπολυτρώσις, εως f redemption, deliverance, setting free

For ἀπολυτρώσεως and the related λυτρον cf. Mk 10:45; Lk 24:21; Rom 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7,14; 4:30; Col 1:14; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18. "In Paul's day the words referred to the way in which people could pay money to buy the freedom of slaves or prisoners of war. Some interpreters doubt that Paul intends this original meaning of the word, but he probably does. The connotation of liberating a slave through payment of a price fits perfectly his earlier use of slavery imagery to depict the human predicament ('under sin' in 3:9)." Moo. Wright points out that "Israel could scarcely hear the word without thinking of the Egypt, of Passover, of the Red Sea, the wilderness wanderings and the promised land. Paul has already hinted that the whole human race languishes in the Egypt of sin (3:9 – a point he will develop more explicitly in chapter 6); what such people need is a new exodus, the cosmic equivalent of what God did for Israel long ago." This new redemption takes place 'in the Messiah, Jesus.'

The ground of justification is not our faith but the atoning work of Christ.

Verse 25

ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων

προέθετο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s

προτιθεμαι plan, purpose, intend; show openly, present

This verb has a root meaning of 'set before' and in the middle voice bears the sense of 'set before oneself', 'consider or plan', or 'set out on public view'. Wright points out that many of the LXX uses are to do with the shewbread in the Temple (cf. Exod 29:23; 40:4, 23; Lev 24:8; 2 Macc 1:8).

ἱλαστήριον, οὗ ἢ atoning sacrifice, means by which sins are forgiven, place where sins are forgiven

This term has been the subject of much debate. The cognate verb means to propitiate, but Dodd, Barrett *et al.* argue that God cannot be the subject of propitiation since he must be its object. For further information on the arguments that surround this term, see Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, in which two chapters are devoted to the subject.

The NIV translates the term 'atoning sacrifice' which is linked with its use in the LXX for the 'mercy seat' or cover of the ark. This is a useful translation in that it reflects the flow of Paul's argument which is precisely that Christ has atoned for our sins through the shedding of his own blood (hence the reference to διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι). The meaning of the term must then be filled out from an understanding of the role of blood sacrifice in the OT and its fulfilment in Christ.

Wright thinks that Paul had in mind the ritual for the Day of Atonement. In Second Temple Jewish perception, "if Israel is in trouble because of sin, the Day of Atonement will put things to rights. To that extent, what Paul has done is simply to declare that God has done the same thing on a once-for-all, grand scale; he is, in that sense, alluding to Jesus as the place where the holy God and sinful Israel meet, in such a way that Israel, rather than being judged, receives atonement." He argues also that Second Temple Judaism believed the suffering of a righteous Jew might in some way atone, as a sacrifice did, for Israel (see 2 Macc 6:12-16) and that this reflects OT ideas found in Daniel 11:35; 12 1-10 and Isaiah 40-55 – particularly 52:13-53:12. Wright continues, "All this may be of help when it comes to the precise meaning of *hilasterion*. By itself, as we saw, it meant 'mercy-seat,' the focal point of the ritual on the Day of Atonement; and thence, the place and/or the means of dealing both with wrath (or punishment) and with sin. Dealing with wrath or punishment is propitiation; with sin, expiation. You propitiate a person who is angry; you expiate a sin, crime, or stain on your character. Vehement rejection of the former idea in many quarters has led some to insist that only 'expiation' is in view here. But the fact remains that in 1:18-3:20 Paul has declared that the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and wickedness and that despite God's forbearance this will finally be meted out; that in 5:8, and in the whole promise of 8:1-30, those who are Christ's are rescued from wrath; and that the passage in which the reason for the change is stated is 3:25-26, where we find that God, though in forbearance allowing sins to go unpunished, has now revealed that righteousness, that saving justice, that causes people to be declared 'righteous' even though they are sinners.

"The lexical history of the word *hilasterion* is sufficiently flexible to admit of particular nuances in different contexts. Paul's context here demands that the word not only retain its sacrificial overtones (the place and means of atonement), but that it carry the note of propitiation of divine wrath – with, of course, the corollary that sins are expiated."

πίστις, εὐς f faith, trust, belief, the Christian faith

The MSS evidence is finely divided between δια πιστεως and δια της πιστεως. "On the one hand, the article may have been added by copyists who wished to point back to δια πιστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ in v.22. On the other hand, later in the chapter when Paul uses πιστις absolutely (i.e. without a modifier), δια is followed by the article (cf. verses 30 and 31)." Metzger.

αἷμα, ατος f blood

'In his blood' can be taken with 'atoning sacrifice' rather than 'through faith.' This is favoured by Wright.

ἐνδειξις, εως f evidence, demonstration
 παρεσις, εως f passing by, overlooking
 προγεγονότων Verb, perf act ptc, gen pl
 προγινομαι happen previously
 ἁμαρτημα, τος n sin, sinful deed

Cf. Acts 14:6; 17:30. The delay in God's judgment was not due to indifference, nor did it imply they were forgotten: God had set a time when he would deal with sin once and for all.

Verse 26

ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, πρὸς τὴν ἐνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιῶντα τὸν ἐκ πιστεως Ἰησοῦ.

ἀνοχη, ης f forebearance, tolerance
 καιρος, ου m time (viewed as occasion rather than an extent)

Paul's gospel is rooted in the historical act of God in Christ.

εἶναι Verb, pres infin εἶμι
 δικαίος, α, ον righteous, just
 δικαιοω see v.24

God has reconciled what seemed irreconcilable: not only sinful mankind to himself, but also his justice and our justification. Wright again reads πιστεως Ἰησοῦ as a reference to the 'faithfulness of Jesus.' "God justifies the one whose status rests on the faithful death of Jesus. Even there, of course, the notion of the believer's own faith is not absent, since it is this faith that precipitates God's announcement of the verdict in the present time. But the basis of this faith is precisely the faithfulness of Jesus seen as the manifestation of the covenant faithfulness of God."

Postscript on vv. 25-26

"There can be no gospel unless there is such a thing as a righteousness of God for the ungodly. But just as little can there be any gospel unless the integrity of God's character is maintained. The problem of the sinful world, the problem of all religion, the problem of God in dealing with a sinful race, is how to unite these two things. The Christian answer to the problem is given by Paul in the words: 'Jesus Christ whom God set forth a propitiation (or, in propitiatory power) in his blood.'" Denney.

Wright comments, "I suggest, therefore, that Paul has here condensed, in typical manner, three trains of thought into a single statement, to which he will then refer back, explaining himself more fully as he does so. First, the righteousness of God is revealed in God's giving of Jesus as the faithful Israelite, through whom the covenant plan to save the world from sin will be put into operation at last, despite universal failure. Second, Jesus' faithfulness was precisely faithfulness unto death, a death understood in such sacrificial terms as would evoke not only the Day of Atonement but also the self-giving of the martyrs and, behind and greater than that, the sacrificial suffering of the Servant. Third, Jesus' self-giving faithfulness to death, seen as the act of God, not of humans operating towards God, had the effect of turning away the divine wrath that otherwise hung over not only Israel but also the whole world. Thus is God's righteousness revealed in the gospel events of Jesus' death and resurrection: God has been true to the covenant, has dealt properly with sin, has come to the rescue of the helpless and has done so with due impartiality between Jew and Gentile."

Verses 27-31

Moo argues that vv.27-31 act as an introduction to Ch 4 and highlights the parallels between:

3:27 and 4:1-2
 3:28 and 4:3-8
 3:29-30 and 4:9-17.

"What Paul does in 3:27-31, then, is quickly touch on the basic points he wants to make about faith before developing them at greater length with respect to Abraham."

Verse 27

Ποῦ οὖν ἢ καύχησις; ἐξεκλείσθη. διὰ ποίου νόμου; τῶν ἔργων; οὐχί, ἀλλὰ διὰ νόμου πιστεως.

που where?

οὖν indicates Paul is now drawing an inference from what he has just written (in verses 21-26).

καυχῆσις, εως f boasting, ground for boasting

The question may be addressed to Jews – they can no longer brag about their superiority to the Gentiles. Cf. on 2:17.

ἐκκλειω exclude, shut out

That door is slammed shut. "The revelation of God's righteousness in Jesus' death shuts out once for all any suggestion that there might be a special status, a 'favoured nation clause,' for ethnic Israel. God's righteousness, in other words, has not been revealed, as might have been expected, in some great victory whereby Israel overcame her enemies and obtained national liberation. It came through the Messiah's dying at the hands of the pagans, as the great act of atonement needed not only by Israel but also by the whole world." Wright. Cf., by way of contrast, Paul's 'boasting' in Gal. 6:14.

ποιος, α, ον what, of what kind

The NIV translates δια ποιου νομου 'on what principle'; Hendriksen, 'on what basis'.

οὐχι (emphatic form of οὐ) not, no
πιστις, εως f faith, trust, belief, the Christian faith

Wright helpfully comments, "Israel's status depended on the gift and performance of Torah; how is this new arrangement undergirded? What sort of Torah sustains it? The Torah characterised by 'works'? No; the Torah characterised by 'faith.' ... Paul is thus distinguishing, not for the last time in the letter, between the Torah seen in two different ways. On the one hand, there is 'the Torah of works' – this is Torah seen as that which defines Israel over against the nations, witnessed by the performance of the works that Torah prescribes – not only sabbath, food-laws and circumcision, though these are the obvious things that, sociologically speaking, give substance to the theologically based separation. On the other hand, there is the new category Paul is forging here: 'the Torah of faith,' in a sense yet to be explained (like many things in chap. 3), gives the indication of where the true, renewed people of God are to be found. He is unwilling, it seems, to give up belief that the God-given Torah defines the people of God. What he has done is to deny that performing 'the works of the Torah,' the things that define Israel ethnically, is the appropriate mode of use for Torah. Rather, the Torah is to be fulfilled through faith; in other words, where someone believes the gospel, there Torah is in fact being fulfilled, even though in a surprising way."

Verse 28

λογιζόμεθα γὰρ δικαιοῦσθαι πίστει ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου.

λογιζομαι reckon, count

The textual evidence for γὰρ is "slightly superior" (Metzger) to that for οὖν.

δικαιοω justify, acquit, declare & treat as righteous

"The word 'justify' and its cognates do not refer to the event of 'conversion' or the process of Christian living... They refer to God's declaration that certain persons are members of the covenant people, that their sins have been dealt with." Wright.

πίσται Noun, dat s πιστις

χωρις prep with gen without, apart from

Verse 29

ἢ Ἰουδαίων ὁ θεὸς μόνον; οὐχὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν; καὶ καὶ ἐθνῶν,

ἢ οἱ

Ἰουδαίος, α, ον a Jew, Jewish, Judean

μονον adv only, alone

ἐθνος, ος n nation, people; τα ἐ. Gentiles

ναι yes, yes indeed, certainly

"If, as Jews proudly confess, there is only one God, then this God must be equally God of Gentiles as well as Jews." Moo. And that means that 'justification' cannot be on the basis of Jewish Torah. "God's faithfulness to the covenant with the Jewish patriarch, Abraham, and his descendants, can only be fulfilled through the creation of a worldwide, Jew-plus-Gentile, family." Wright.

Verse 30

εἴπερ εἷς ὁ θεός, ὃς δικαιοῦσαι περιτομῆν ἐκ πίστεως καὶ ἀκροβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.

εἴπερ since, if it is true that
εἷς, μια, ἐν γεν ἑνος, μιας, ἑνος one
περιτομη, ης f circumcision, those
circumcised, Jews
ἀκροβυστία, ας f uncircumcision, non-Jews

"'By faith' and 'through faith' are not to be distinguished. The change in preposition is only a rhetorical device (cf. 4:11; 5:10; 1 Cor 12:8; 2 Cor 3:11)." Barrett. Faith is the true obedience which God has sought (1:5; 16:26). It is foundational to Paul's argument that there is but one path to justification, whether for circumcised or uncircumcised, the way of faith.

Verse 31

νόμον οὐκ καταργοῦμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως; μὴ γένοιτο, ἀλλὰ νόμον ἱστανόμεν.

καταργεω render ineffective, cancel, do
away with

'Law' here means the Old Testament or Old Covenant – i.e. the question is whether everything that God has done before is made of no effect. This leads to a consideration of Abraham in chapter 4. "In other words, the Mosaic law may not play a role in justification, but Paul does not want his readers to conclude that it plays no role at all in God's plan of salvation." Moo.

γένειτο Verb, aor opt, 3s γινομαι
ἱστημι and ἱστανω set, establish

The whole of the covenant, the Old Testament, is established, fulfilled, brought to its designed end, in and through Jesus Christ. It is not cast aside but is receives its ultimate affirmation in him.