

## Good News for the Guilty

In Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul has made it clear that all of us are guilty of sin. We are all guilty before a holy God and under His wrath. We all stand accountable to Him (3:20). We are in need of some good news. As Paul comes to 3:21 that's exactly what he begins to proclaim – good news for the guilty. At this point in Romans, Paul begins to explain what Jesus has done for sinners. Today we are looking at a passage that Martin Luther called “the chief point . . . of the whole Bible.” It is a passage full of theological truths that flesh out the good news.

### Opening Discussion

#### Match the Terms with the Correct Definition

____ Justify	a. <i>The turning away of wrath by an offering</i>
____ Grace	b. <i>The purchase of another's freedom through payment of a ransom</i>
____ Redemption	c. <i>A legal term that mean to acquit; to declare righteous</i>
____ Propitiation NIV = “Sacrifice of atonement”	d. <i>Unmerited favor</i>

### Read Romans 3:21-26

1. Verse 21 says that the “righteousness of God has been manifested.” How does the work of Christ on the cross manifest God’s righteousness?
2. What does Paul mean when he says that “there is no distinction” (v. 22)?
3. How would you explain verse 24 to someone who knows nothing about the Bible?

Brian said:

Justification . . . is a legal term. It means that one is acquitted. One is judged as not guilty and therefore free from all condemnation. But acquittal is only part of what it means to be justified. On the positive side it means, "to be declared righteous." God declares that one has a standing of righteousness before Him. And so it means to be free of the demerits of sin and possessing the merits of righteousness.

4. Justification mean "to be declared righteous" rather than "to be made righteous."  
Why do you think this distinction might be important?
  
5. What are the various theological truths that this passage teaches about what Jesus accomplished on the cross for the one who has faith in him?

Brian said:

Once again you've committed that sin that you vowed for the thousandth time that you wouldn't do again. And . . . you feel guilty. Here's the good news for you . . . . When you expressed faith in Christ's work on the cross for you, God declared that the righteousness of Christ is yours. God declared, "Not guilty." That was your standing with God the moment you trusted Jesus and that is still your standing with Him even as you struggle with sin. Your current struggle with sin does not change what God has declared to be true about you. Your struggle with sin will never change what God has declared to be true about you. . . .Let these truths sink down deep into your soul. Live in these truths. Relate to God on the basis of what He has done for you in Christ.

6. Do you ever struggle to believe that God really does see you as righteous even as you continue to struggle with sin? Why or why not?
  
7. How might it help you in your battle with sin to cling to the truth that God declares you as righteous?
  
8. What do you sense is the main thing that God is saying to you through this passage?