

**ADULT UNIT III: Standing in the Faith**  
**ADULT GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Justified by Faith in Jesus**  
**ADULT TOPIC: No Need to Boast**

**LESSON 10**  
**DATE: May 5, 2024**

**DEVOTIONAL READING: John 3:1-8, 13-17**  
**BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Romans 3:21-30**  
**PRINT PASSAGE: Same**

**Home Daily Bible Reading**

Apr. 29	M	Psalm 35:1-7, 22-28	Vindicate Me, O Lord My God
Apr. 30	T	Psalm 112	Blessed Are They Who Fear God
May 1	W	Acts 3:12-26	Repent and Turn to God
May 2	Th	John 3:1-8, 13-17	God So Loved the World
May 3	F	Psalm 5	Lord, Lead Me in Your Righteousness
May 4	Sa	1 John 1:1-2:2	Christ Our Atoning Sacrifice
May 5	Su	Romans 3:21-30	Atonement by Christ's Blood

**EXALT!**

**Invocation** – Teacher or Leaner

**Celebration** – “Sing Praise to God Who Reigns Above” - #68 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

**Declaration** – Romans 3:21-30 (Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.)

**Righteousness through Faith**

<sup>21</sup> But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed and is attested by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, <sup>23</sup> since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; <sup>24</sup> they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; <sup>26</sup> it was to

**demonstrate at the present time his own righteousness, so that he is righteous and he justifies the one who has the faith of Jesus.**

**<sup>27</sup> Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. Through what kind of law? That of works? No, rather through the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. <sup>29</sup> Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of gentiles also? Yes, of gentiles also, <sup>30</sup> since God is one, and he will justify the circumcised on the ground of faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.**

**Affirmation** – We are justified by faith. (*Spoken together by class and teacher*).

**ENGAGE:** (5-10 min.)

At this point in his argument, Paul has established that Jews and Gentiles are equally guilty of sin before God (Romans 1–2, but see also 3:9), since the law only identifies sin and does not have the power to erase it (3:20).

The nouns *righteous* and *justice* are both English translations of the Greek *dikaiosune*, so God is both fully right (in holiness and justice) as well as the one who makes those trusting in God also in line with the complete standard of rightness (3:26).

The “righteousness of God” (3:21) is Paul’s wordplay on both God being fully in line with all standards of rightness and on God’s ability to erase a person’s record of sin, to count a person “right” with God, which God does through Jesus’ faith(fullness) in making a sacrifice of himself on the cross (Philippians 2:8-11) to “buy back” (redeem, Romans 3:24) God’s people from sin-induced exile from God.

The first-century use of the term *grace* was in the context of patronage: a patron extended “grace” to an individual, opening new social/financial opportunities, and the grateful beneficiary’s responsibility in return was support and loyalty. God’s grace is free in that it is God’s free initiative (3:24). It cost God greatly, and we should respond with gratitude and complete loyalty (our active faith).

The “sacrifice of atonement” (Greek, “mercy seat”; see also Hebrews 9:5) refers to the Ark of the Covenant on which sacrificial blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:14). The ceremony reminded Israel of the price

of sin and was intended to serve as a symbol of their trust in God to forgive their sins and of their hope for a Redeemer who could pay the price (Romans 3:25).

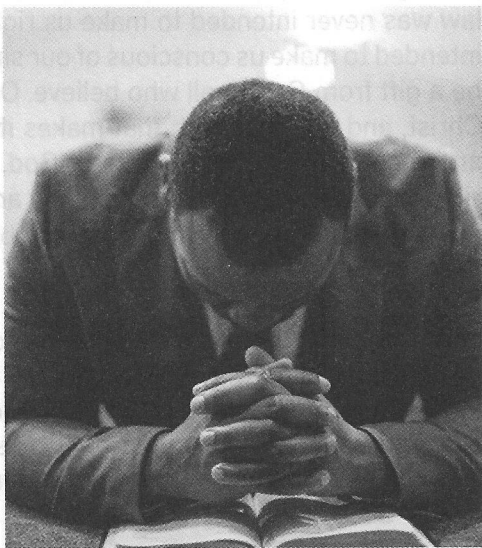
The "one who has faith/believes" (3:26) is an echo of Habakkuk 2:4 in that God makes righteous the one who trusts in Jesus' faithful sacrifice to cover his sins and thus lives because of it (3:26): his life is due to Jesus' sacrifice, and his life is now motivated by faith, that sacrifice (see also Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38).

### **Unit III, "Standing in the Faith,"**

has four lessons drawn from Romans that encourage believers to continue to stand in the faith. The first lesson indicates that the righteousness of God comes through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. The second lesson provides an example from the life of Abraham. The third lesson explores the meaning of being justified by faith, and the fourth lesson traces faith that comes from what is heard through the word of Christ. Thus, those who are called by Christ's name are encouraged to confess with their lips, believe in their hearts, and stand in faith daily.

Break into small groups. Think about and discuss the following questions:

- 1) Some adults know they need help to achieve their best potential. Think of someone in your life who helped you achieve your best potential. Share with the group.
- 2) Some adults brag about their accomplishments. Has anyone ever bragged about their accomplishments in your presence? How did that make you feel?
- 3) Adults acknowledge commonalities among people. Who do you share commonalities with?



**The Righteousness of God (Romans 3:21-24):** The words that open this passage, "But now," indicate what is to be and builds on what was before. The law was never intended to make us righteous (i.e., justified), but rather it was intended to make us conscious of our sins. Righteousness of God is intended to be a gift from God to all who believe. Our faith is a direct connection to Jesus Christ, and it is that faith that makes it possible for us to be called righteous and receive the righteousness of God. It is not works but faith which allows righteousness. Paul affirms that Jew and Gentile are not immune to sin. Both may attain salvation in the same way because there is no difference between the two.

Paul notes that there is a stark difference between justification by grace and a misunderstanding that salvation is works-based. When one attempts to work for salvation, it's as if they are seeking to be compensated for their work. However, justification which comes by God's grace, is free through the redemption that comes from Jesus Christ. (Standard Lesson Commentary, NIV 2023-24, p. 307-309)

**The Sacrifice of Christ (Romans 3:25-26):** Each time we take the Holy Sacrament, we repeat these words, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world." God knew we needed a sacrifice to atone for our sins to be forgiven. Jesus was that sacrificial appeasement (the propitiation) for our sins. Prior to Jesus, sacrifices were made with animals, but Jesus would be the ultimate sacrifice and Jesus' sacrifice takes away the sins of the world. (Standard Lesson Commentary, NIV 2023-24, p. 309)



**The Boasting of Humanity (Romans 3:27-30):** If a person could earn their own

salvation, then there would be reason to boast. However, since salvation is not earned by anything a sinful person can achieve, then no one has the right to boast. Paul makes it clear, keeping the law does not produce righteousness:



it merely makes us aware of our shortcomings. Justification, however, only comes by faith. And the works we perform after justification are the evidence of our faith. We are excited and cannot do enough to satisfy the One who has saved us by faith.

Jews sometimes assumed that since they were God's chosen people that God did not favor anyone else. Jesus made it clear that God's special care was not exclusive to Israel, but was for all who love God. And that same God would justify the circumcised and the uncircumcised through the same faith. Therefore, there was no need for anyone to boast. (Standard Lesson Commentary, NIV 2023-24, pgs. 310-311)

**ELEVATE:** (10 min.)

Discuss the following questions as an entire group:

- 1) Provide a summary of Romans 1–2 which gives the background for Paul's claim that all people (Jews and Gentiles) have sinned. Note that the law makes people aware of their sin but does not do away with sin's consequences.
- 2) Discuss the cost of sin in human life. Humans cannot atone for their sin; only God can do away with sin. Jesus Christ, God in human form, has paid the price for atonement. Discuss the value of God's gift of grace and justification.
- 3) Invite learners to identify the evidence of sin present in the world today. In what ways do we ignore or acknowledge the reality of sin and God's gift of grace to us and to the world?

**iTHINK:** (5–7 min.)

1. Discuss our responsibility in response to the righteousness of God. How can we help others focus on the difference divine forgiveness can make in ourselves? in our communities?
2. Suggest that participants listen carefully to the prayers that are spoken in church. How do such prayers reflect dependence on God for forgiveness?
3. Identify ways that we live as people justified and redeemed by God? Brainstorm ways to boasting while inviting faith and trust in a God who offers grace and redemption.

**KEY VERSES: "For there is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:22b-24.**