

# Romans Chapter Three

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## Overview

In “Romans Chapter One” I showed how that the Greek *pistis* doesn’t mean “faith” but “faithfulness” which is proven by Paul’s quote from Habakkuk, “The just shall live by faith [*pistis* 4102]” (1:17), “the just shall live by his faith” (Hab 2:4), “live because of his **faithfulness**” (NET), “live by his **faithfulness**” (NIV). Therefore, “the righteousness of God *which is* by **faith [faithfulness] of Jesus Christ,**” isn’t about our faith at all, but about Jesus Christ’s faithfulness, “the righteousness of God through **the faithfulness of Jesus Christ**” (NET).

In “Romans Chapter Two” I defined the two main distinctions within the law of Moses as the moral *righteousness* of the law, and the non-moral *actions* of the law. The non-moral *actions* of the law are the special ordinances God imposed upon His people by circumcision: abstinence from unclean meats, keeping the Sabbath and other holy days, observing the annual feasts, tithing to the priests, and offering animal sacrifices. Because these two main distinctions aren’t being distinguished but are being conflated as simply the moral *righteousness* of the law, therefore it’s being taught today that God’s righteousness isn’t by morally righteous living, but simply by believing or having faith! Therefore, all of the Scriptures about Jesus Christ’s faithfulness have been translated to sound like it’s our faith rather than His faithfulness.

Here in “Romans Chapter Three” Paul is going to explain the purpose of the law and its place in God’s overall purpose of His Son Jesus Christ. Specifically, he is going to contrast the actions of the Levitical priests in sacrificing animals with the faithfulness of God’s Son in sacrificing Himself. But this message, however, is obscured by the mistranslation of his statement, “Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation [*hilastērion* 2435] through faith [*faithfulness*] in his blood” (v. 25). The Greek *hilastērion* appears only one other time in the New Testament, “And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing **the mercyseat [hilastērion 2435]**” (Heb 9:5). It’s the mercy seat in the holiest place of the Tabernacle where the high priest would enter only once per year on *Yôm* [H3117] *Kāpār* [H3722] or Atonement Day, “But **into the second went the high priest alone once every year**, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people” (Heb 9:7), “the high priest entereth **into the holy place every year** with blood of others” (Heb 9:25). The mercy seat is the necessary context by which Paul’s intended message is understood. Since we can’t make the intended connection with the annual Atonement Day performed by the high priest under the Old Covenant, we don’t have the necessary context in our thinking to understand properly.

Making matters even worse, the Greek nouns *ergon* for “actions” and *pistis* for “faithfulness” are mistranslated in this chapter as “deeds” or “works” and “faith” or “believe” respectively: “Therefore by the **deeds [ergon 2041]** of the law” (v. 20); “Even the righteousness of God *which is* by **faith [pistis 4102]** of Jesus Christ” (v. 22); “Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation [*mercy seat*] through **faith [pistis 4102]** in his blood” (v. 25); “that he might be just, and the justifier of him which **believeth [pistis 4102]** in Jesus” (v. 26); “By what law? of **works [ergon 2041]**? Nay: but by the law of **faith [pistis 4102]**” (v. 27); “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by **faith [pistis 4102]** without the **deeds [ergon 2041]** of the law” (v. 28); “Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by **faith [pistis 4102]**, and uncircumcision through **faith [pistis 4102]**” (v. 30).

By those two errors imposed upon this passage—the missing context of the annual Atonement Day, and the mistranslation of those two key words—Paul’s message has been corrupted into a different “gospel” message entirely. His own conclusion of what he taught in this passage, “**Therefore we conclude** that a man is justified by **faith** [*pistis* 4102] without the **deeds** [*ergon* 2041] of the law” (v. 28), is being misrepresented into a divergent conclusion—that salvation is by believing rather than working. It’s now being taught falsely that the deeds or works of the law was attempting to live morally righteous under the Old Covenant law but that under the New Covenant we’re saved simply by having faith or believing. People are being deceived into misunderstanding that they just can’t live morally righteous before God and don’t need to anyway because salvation is by faith alone. Furthermore, they’re even being discouraged from living morally righteous through fear that they might be trusting in their own righteousness and therefore not saved by faith alone. This error then leads into the next chapter teaching that Abraham was supposedly a great man of faith, “For if Abraham were justified by **works** [*ergon* 2041] ... **Abraham believed God**, and it was counted unto him for righteousness: (4:2,3).

The truth is that Paul wasn’t teaching an antithesis between working and believing, but an antithesis between the actions of the priests and the faithfulness of Christ—the priests’ actions of shedding the blood of animals under the Old Covenant, and Jesus Christ’s faithfulness in shedding His blood under the New. The *ergon* or “actions” were the high priest’s actions on Atonement Day of sprinkling the blood of bulls and goats on the mercy seat, while the *pistis* or “faithfulness” was Jesus Christ’s faithfulness to His Father in shedding His own blood upon the true mercy seat, “Whom God hath set forth to be a **propitiation** [*mercy seat*] through **faith** [*faithfulness*] in his blood” (v. 25). There’s no such issue in Scripture of faith versus works, or believing versus meriting. The true antithesis is Christ’s faithfulness to give Himself as the Sacrifice for our sins versus the actions of the high priests under the law of offering animal sacrifices for sins.

Paul’s concluding point that we’re justified by Jesus Christ’s faithfulness in sacrificing Himself without the actions of the priests sacrificing animals, “Therefore **we conclude** that a man is justified by **faith** [*faithfulness*] without the **deeds** [*actions*] of the law” (v. 28), has been changed to something else entirely—that we’re justified by faith and not by living right. In fact, as it’s being taught today, living morally righteously is an attempt at saving ourselves apart from Christ’s sacrifice for our sins on the cross. Thus, not only is morally righteous living unnecessary for salvation, it’s even detrimental! Protestants everywhere are falsely assured of salvation by simply being a believer. Consequently, the standard of moral righteousness by which they’re taught to live isn’t the standard which Jesus Christ Himself upheld for entering the Kingdom, “That **except your righteousness** shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case **enter into the kingdom** of heaven” (Mat 5:20).

## What advantage did the Jews have?

“**What advantage then hath the Jew?** or what profit *is there* of circumcision?” (v. 1). Paul just taught at the end of the previous chapter that if the circumcised don’t keep the law, their circumcision isn’t even counted, “but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision” (2:25), but if the uncircumcised keep the law they’re counted as circumcised, “shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?” (2:26), and that true circumcision before God isn’t a cutting in the body but a condition of the heart, “neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh ... circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit” (2:28,29). Since that’s true about circumcision, it could be wrongly concluded that circumcision doesn’t even profit. Why

then was Abraham and his descendants given circumcision? What advantage did circumcision give to the Jewish people over all other people?

## The Jews heard first

“Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed **the oracles of God**” (v. 2). The main advantage the circumcised Jews had over everyone else was the privilege of hearing the gospel of Jesus Christ first, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ... to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (1:16). The oral reading of the Scriptures, “the oracles of God,” was restricted to the circumcised in the synagogues and in the Temple. To them was committed “the oracles of God,” therefore they were given the privilege of hearing Jesus Christ’s preaching first: “And when he was come into his own country, **he taught them in their synagogue**” (Mat 13:54); “And when he was come **into the temple**, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as **he was teaching**” (Mat 21:23); “I sat daily with you **teaching in the temple**” (Mat 26:55); “And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered **into the synagogue, and taught**” (Mar 1:21); “And when the sabbath day was come, he began to **teach in the synagogue**” (Mar 6:2); “And Jesus answered and said, while **he taught in the temple**” (Mar 12:35); “I was daily with you **in the temple teaching**” (Mar 14:49); “as his custom was, **he went into the synagogue** on the sabbath day, and stood up for **to read**” (Luk 4:16); “And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered **into the synagogue and taught**” (Luk 6:6); “These things said he **in the synagogue, as he taught** in Capernaum” (Jhn 6:59); “And **he taught daily in the temple**” (Luk 19:47); “And it came to pass, *that* on one of those days, as **he taught** the people **in the temple, and preached the gospel**” (Luk 20:1); “And in the day time he was **teaching in the temple**” (Luk 21:37); “Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up **into the temple, and taught**” (Jhn 7:14); “And early in the morning he came again **into the temple**, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and **taught them**” (Jhn 8:2); “I spake openly to the world; **I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple**” (Jhn 18:20).

The Jews were given this advantage of hearing the gospel first, not only in their own land from Jesus Christ Himself, but also in distant lands from the apostle Paul: “they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went **into the synagogue** on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after **the reading of the law and the prophets**” (Act 13:14-15); “And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into **the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake**, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed [*trusted*]” (Act 14:1); “they came to Thessalonica, where was **a synagogue of the Jews**: And Paul, **as his manner was**, went in unto them, and three sabbath days **reasoned with them out of the scriptures**” (Act 17:1-2); “And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming *thither* went **into the synagogue of the Jews**” (Act 17:10); “Therefore **disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews**, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him” (Act 17:17); “And he **reasoned in the synagogue** every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks” (Act 18:4); “And he came to Ephesus, and left them there: but he himself entered **into the synagogue, and reasoned with the Jews**” (Act 18:19); “And he went **into the synagogue, and spake boldly** for the space of three months, **disputing and persuading** the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Act 19:8).

Circumcision along with the keeping of the Sabbath day ensured that the Jews would be the first to hear the gospel in every city because the reading of the law was in the synagogue on the Sabbath. And because the religious leaders in every city were the Jews, it would have been wrong for Paul to begin preaching and teaching the gospel to the Gentiles first. Therefore, Paul always gave the Jews first opportunity to hear with

the hope of receiving then teaching it to the people themselves. But when they refused the message, they couldn't legitimately argue against Paul turning his attention from them and reaching the people himself. This same principle is true in households. Nobody should enter a house and begin reaching a family without going to the head of that household first. If the head hears first and listens, then they will teach their own family. But if they won't listen, then they can be bypassed to reach their family.

Speaking of my own personal experience, I wrote a paper titled "True Theology" in which I presented from the Scriptures the true view of God and His Son Jesus Christ. I presented this paper to the pastors of my Baptist church with the hope they would repent of their false Trinitarian view and worship the true God. However, when they rejected the message and the messenger, I was then free to reach anyone in that church with the message. Of course, they could certainly ban the messenger from their building but they couldn't bar the message from their people. This was the conflict Paul experienced everywhere he preached—although he was bound, his message couldn't be, "Wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, *even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound*" (2Ti 2:9).

## God's faithfulness to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

"For what if some **did not believe** [*apisteō* 569]? shall their **unbelief** [*apistia* 570] make the **faith** [*pistis* 4102] **of God** without effect?" (v. 3). The Greek *apisteō* is the verb form of the adjective *apistos* which is simply the negation of the adjective *pistos* for "faithful," "loyal," or "trustworthy." Its noun form is *apistia* which is "unfaithfulness." Paul's question is rendered more correctly as "What if some were unfaithful? Will their unfaithfulness nullify God's faithfulness?" (NIV). His Jewish brethren would argue that Jesus of Nazareth must not be who He claimed to be since He was rejected by all the synagogues without exception. But Paul's reply is that the Son of God doesn't need a seal of approval from the Jews in the synagogues. His approval was from His Father by the miracles He did through Him: "the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me" (Jhn 5:36); "him hath God the Father sealed" (Jhn 6:27); "If I do not the works of my Father, believe [*trust*] me not" (Jhn 10:37).

Christ preached His gospel in their synagogues for their benefit, so they would hear first and receive Him as their Messiah sent from God. However, they were unfaithful to God in not receiving the one He sent: "And when he was come into his own country, **he taught them in their synagogue** ... And he did not many mighty works there because of their **unbelief** [*apistia* 570]" (Mat 13:54,58); "And when the sabbath day was come, he began to **teach in the synagogue** ... And he marvelled because of their **unbelief** [*apistia* 570]" (Mar 6:2,6); "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, **he went into the synagogue** on the sabbath day, and **stood up for to read** ... And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath" (Luk 4:16,28).

Paul asks, "shall their unbelief [*unfaithfulness*] make the faith [*faithfulness*] of God without effect?" What does their unfaithfulness matter to God? Is their unfaithfulness in rejecting His Son going to abrogate His faithfulness to their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Of course not! He simply fulfilled His faithfulness to their fathers through Gentiles instead.

## Let God be true

“God forbid: yea, **let God be true, but every man a liar**; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged” (v. 4). Because Paul’s enemies—his fellow Jewish brethren opposed to the gospel message he preached—were desperate for anything to malign him, they falsely accused him of promoting evil for a greater good, “Let us do evil, that good may come” (v. 8). That “our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God” (v. 5), is that his message supposedly was for us to actually live in unrighteousness so that God’s righteousness would be magnified.

By “let God be true, but every man a liar,” Paul was stating that God is simply shown to be true when judging men as liars. God isn’t judging sin to get glory for Himself. Paul will say a little later “if **the truth of God** hath more abounded through **my lie unto his glory**” (v. 7), to clarify that in no way is God getting more glory by men lying even more! Rather, that God is proven to be true, “let God be true,” when exposing men as liars.

## Justified in His sayings

“God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, **That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings**, and mightest overcome when thou art judged” (v. 4). Paul is now going to bolster his earlier point, “Who will render to every man according to his deeds [*actions*]” (2:6). It’s the actions of good or evil that God will judge without showing any respect of the person committing the actions, “Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that **doeth evil**, of the **Jew first**, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that **worketh good**, to the **Jew first**, and also to the Gentile: For there is **no respect of persons with God**” (2:9-11). He now quotes from David, arguably the greatest Jewish man in Israel’s history, to substantiate that God is no respecter of persons in judgment. If God was shown to be true by exposing even the greatest of all Jews as a liar, then the same follows for all other men, “every man a liar.” David committed adultery with Bathsheba, committed murder by having her husband Uriah killed in battle, then lied about it all to cover it up.

It was when David finally repented of his sin that he exclaimed, “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest” (Psa 51:4). Second Samuel chapter 12 records God sending the prophet Nathan to tell David a parable about a rich man that took the only lamb of a poor man, then killed that lamb to feed one of his guests. And David reacted in anger upon hearing it, “As the LORD liveth, **the man that hath done this *thing* shall surely die**” (2Sa 12:5). But, of course, he hadn’t been made privy to the fact that he was the subject of the story, “And Nathan said to David, **Thou *art* the man**” (2Sa 12:7). This parable brought out from David’s own mouth the truth he had been hiding in his heart, “Behold, thou desirest **truth in the inward parts**: and in the **hidden *part*** thou shalt make me to know wisdom” (Psa 51:6). In hearing a story supposedly about another man, it compelled David to judge evil actions objectively without respect of persons—without respect of the person being himself!

This goes back to what Paul stated earlier, “Which shew **the work [*action*] of the law written in their hearts**, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean **while accusing or else excusing one another**” (2:15). The law was written in David’s heart—he knew in his heart that his actions had been evil as defined by the law. And in accusing this “other” man, he accused himself.

God's wisdom in using Nathan's parable to expose David's heart, "in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom" (Psa 51:6), was demonstrative and prophetic of the parables Jesus Christ would one day use to uncover the corrupt hearts of the Jewish leaders in His day. Jesus told the chief priests, elders, and Pharisees a parable about a man who sent his two sons to work in his vineyard, "Whether of them twain did the will of *his* father? **They say unto him, The first.** Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." (Mat 21:31). Out of their own mouths they judged themselves unworthy. Therefore, Christ's saying caused them to justify God in turning to the Gentiles. He then told them another parable of a householder that planted a vineyard, "When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? **They say unto him,** He will miserably **destroy those wicked men,** and will **let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen,** which shall render him the fruits in their seasons" (Mat 21:40-41). They judged themselves worthy of death while justifying God in giving His "vineyard" to Gentiles. Christ's parables or sayings caused these wicked men to unwittingly justify Him, "That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings."

David's sin being exposed caused him to recognize that circumcision in his flesh made him no better than any other man. Nathan's parable about the two men said nothing of their flesh, whether they were circumcised or uncircumcised, "There were **two men** in one city; **the one rich, and the other poor**" (2Sa 12:1). It was just a rich man and a poor man and their actions toward one another.

With Uriah out in battle and his wife now expecting, it would eventually be known that the baby wasn't his. Therefore, David brought him home so that he would sleep with his wife and make it appear that it was. But Uriah's righteous actions proved to be David's undoing. In honor for the Ark, the Israelites, the Jews, his commander, and his fellow servants, he wouldn't sleep with his wife while they were sleeping in the open fields, "The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to **lie with my wife?** *as* thou livest, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing." (2Sa 11:11). His actions were honorable but David's sinful. And all the while he had been sleeping in the open fields, David had been sleeping with his wife! The next night, David stooped even lower that "he made him drunk" (2Sa 11:13), yet Uriah still wouldn't go home to his wife. Of course, David finally resolved to just have Uriah killed in battle so it would appear the baby was his—that while he had been home for a few days that he had slept with his wife.

David's statement "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and **in sin did my mother conceive me**" (Psa 51:5), along with Paul's teaching later in Romans, "Wherefore, as **by one man sin** entered into the world, and death by sin; and so **death passed upon all men,** for that **all have sinned**" (5:12), are used to claim we're conceived with some kind of sin nature inherited from Adam. David, however, wasn't talking about an innate sin nature but simply the natural state of all men, "uncircumcision which is by nature" (2:27). He came to recognize that while in the womb, there was no difference between him and Uriah the Hittite, and that circumcision in his flesh eight days after birth made him no better. Uriah's actions proved more righteous than David's. But David spoke other words to describe himself in the womb, "thou hast covered me **in my mother's womb.** I will praise thee; for **I am fearfully and wonderfully made**" (Psa 139:13,14). He certainly wouldn't have been "wonderfully made" if he had been made with a sin nature! Are we actually created sinful? God forbid!

David committed murder to cover his adultery, then lied to try and cover it all. What did it ultimately matter that he had been circumcised on the eighth day while Uriah hadn't been? It's ironic that the actions of a Hittite—which God's people were supposed to have destroyed when they conquered the land—proved to be

more righteous than the actions of the greatest Jewish man in the land. And if David didn't get away with lying, nobody else will either, "let God be true, but every man a liar."

The context of Paul's quote from David, "For he is **not a Jew [praise]**, which is one outwardly; neither *is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh*: But he *is a Jew [praise]*, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit [*breath*], *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God" (2:28-29). Circumcised David wasn't "a praise" in his actions, but uncircumcised Uriah was.

## Our unrighteousness

"But if **our unrighteousness** commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? **Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance?** (I speak as a man) God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?" (vs. 5-6). Paul wasn't preaching, as falsely accused, that our unrighteousness commends or glorifies God's righteousness. That message makes no sense. It would make God righteous in allowing sin and unrighteous in judging it! How would He even judge the world of sin if that were the case?

## The truth of God

"For if the truth of God hath more abounded **through my lie unto his glory**; why yet am I also **judged as a sinner?** And not *rather*, (**as we be slanderously reported**, and as some affirm that we say,) **Let us do evil, that good may come?** whose damnation is just." (vs. 7-8). Because Paul's enemies accused him of false doctrine and sin, he proceeds to take their accusation to the logical conclusion to prove its absurdity. If he truly is a liar as they say, and lying glorifies God, then he's glorifying God through his lying and therefore shouldn't be judged as a sinner. The very thing his enemies accused him of, taken to its logical conclusion, actually vindicates him of their accusations. If lying ultimately glorifies God, and he's a liar, then he's glorifying God!

That his enemies had nothing legitimately against him was supported by the judicial trials he endured. All of his imprisonments and hearings before various judges and rulers that consummated at the highest court in Rome, proved that nothing could be found against him. Therefore, since their accusations against him were groundless, then his gospel message was exonerated. Jesus Christ said, "Blessed are ye, when *men* shall revile you, and persecute *you*, and shall **say all manner of evil against you falsely**, for my sake" (Mat 5:11). And Peter likewise, "Having a good conscience; that, whereas they **speak evil of you**, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that **falsely accuse** your good conversation in Christ" (1Pe 3:16).

By "whose damnation is just," Paul wasn't saying that damnation is just for those slanderously reporting him of saying something he didn't say, but for those doing what Paul was slanderously reported of saying. He was making it clear that not only he wasn't saying such things as accused, but that damnation is just for anyone doing such things—doing evil so that some kind of greater good would come from it.

## Are the Jews better than the Greeks?

“What then? **are we better *than they***? No, in no wise: for we have before proved **both Jews and Gentiles [hellēn 1672]**, that they are all under sin” (v. 9). Although translated here as “Gentiles,” it’s the word *hellēn* for the Greek people specifically. And Paul compared the Jews with the Greeks other times in his letter: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth [*trusts*]; to **the Jew** first, and also to **the Greek [hellēn 1672]**” (1:16); “Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of **the Jew** first, and also of **the Gentile [hellēn 1672]**; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to **the Jew** first, and also to **the Gentile [hellēn 1672]**” (2:9-10); “For there is no difference between **the Jew** and **the Greek [hellēn 1672]**: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” (10:12).

The Jews had many advantages over the Greeks, “**What advantage then hath the Jew?** or what profit is there of circumcision? **Much every way**” (vs. 1,2). Their primary advantage was that they were given the first opportunity to hear Christ’s gospel message of salvation, “the gospel of Christ ... **to the Jew first**, and also **to the Greek**” (1:16). But did their many advantages make them better than the Greeks, “What then? are we better *than they*?” Paul concludes that in no way were they better because “they are all under sin.”

## All under sin

“What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles [hellēn 1672], that they are **all under sin**” (v. 9). That “all under sin” is what Paul also stated to the Galatians, “But **the scripture** hath concluded **all under sin**” (Gal 3:22). It’s the Scriptures—which Paul is going to quote extensively in verses 10-18—that concluded all are under sin, “If they sin against thee, (for *there is* no man that sinneth not,)” (1Ki 8:46; 2Ch 6:36), “For *there is* not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Ecc 7:20).

God’s people knew that they all had sinned because Moses commanded various sacrifices for sins: “But the flesh of the bullock, and his skin, and his dung, shalt thou burn with fire without the camp: it **is a sin offering**” (Exo 29:14); “And he brought the bullock for **the sin offering**” (Lev 8:14); “And Moses said unto Aaron, Go unto the altar, and offer thy **sin offering**, and thy burnt offering, and make an atonement for thyself, and **for the people**” (Lev 9:7); “And Aaron shall offer his bullock of **the sin offering**” (Lev 16:6); “And he shall make an atonement for the holy *place*, because of the uncleanness of **the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins**” (Lev 16:16); “And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement **for the children of Israel for all their sins** once a year” (Lev 16:34); “And by reason hereof he ought, as **for the people**, so also for himself, to **offer for sins**” (Heb 5:3); “Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first **for his own sins, and then for the people’s**” (Heb 7:27); “But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and **for the errors of the people**” (Heb 9:7).

However, God said nothing to His people about offering sacrifices when He brought them out from Egypt, but simply that they must obey His voice and walk in His ways, “For **I spake not unto your fathers**, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, **concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices**: But this thing commanded I them, saying, **Obey my voice**, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my

people: and **walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you**, that it may be well unto you” (Jer 7:22-23). But because they were sinning, He added the requirement of sacrifices, “Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions” (Gal 3:19). Animal sacrifices was God’s mercy upon them when they sinned, otherwise it would have been “one strike and you’re out” so to speak. He allowed those sins to be covered so that they could continue living righteously before Him without sinning.

The teaching today that we’re saved by faith is bolstered by the claim that righteousness under the law meant keeping it perfectly without ever sinning even once—one strike and you’re out! Supposedly the law was given only to prove that nobody could live righteously, therefore concluding that righteousness is by faith. And James’ statement, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all” (Jas 2:10), is one of the main proof-texts for that teaching.

James, however, wasn’t nullifying the righteousness of the law but upholding it. This is apparent by his injunction for keeping it all by simply keeping just one, “If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**, ye do well” (Jas 2:8). Fulfilling all the righteousness the law required is accomplished by keeping just one law, “**Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore **love is the fulfilling of the law.**” (Rom 13:9-10), “**For all the law is fulfilled in one word**, even in this; **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**” (Gal 5:14). James wasn’t saying that all the law just couldn’t be kept, but was reprimanding those that weren’t keeping it all. Keeping only some of it, and even keeping nearly all of it, still falls short of God’s requirement for keeping all of it. To “keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all,” is that keeping all but one is as if keeping none at all. It wasn’t that they couldn’t do it, but that they weren’t doing it.

## There is none righteous

“As it is written, **There is none righteous**, no, not one” (v. 10). Paul now begins quoting repeatedly from the Scriptures a long list of Israel’s sins against God. But this first quote is a little difficult to place. Most likely it’s this statement from Isaiah, “Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, **that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none** that sheweth, yea, *there is* none that declareth, yea, *there is* none that heareth your words.” (Isa 41:26).

The Scriptures make the distinction between righteousness in an absolute sense and righteousness in a relative sense. The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely righteous before God because He never sinned even once: “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” (Jhn 8:46); “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin” (2Co 5:21); “was in all points tempted like as *we are*, yet without sin” (Heb 4:15); “Who did no sin” (1Pe 2:22); “in him is no sin” (1Jo 3:5). And He is the only one absolutely righteous: “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer 23:6); “Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more” (Jhn 16:10); “Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1Co 1:30); “that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21); “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust” (1Pe 3:18); “Jesus Christ the righteous” (1Jo 2:1).

That “There is none righteous, no, not one” is that until the Son of God came into this world, there wasn’t even one person absolutely righteous before God because all have sinned. But there were, however, those that were righteous before God in a relative sense. In the next chapter, Paul will use Abraham as our example of being counted or considered righteous by God, “For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed [*trusted*]

God, and it was **counted unto him for righteousness**" (4:3). This righteousness by which Abraham was blessed, was also true of God's people under the Old Covenant, "**And it shall be our righteousness**, if we observe to **do all these commandments** before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us" (Deu 6:25). None of them were absolutely righteous, but when they walked with Him and kept His commandments, God considered it or counted it righteousness before Him.

God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel, "Though these three men, **Noah, Daniel, and Job**, were in it, they should deliver *but* their own souls by **their righteousness**, saith the Lord GOD ... Though **Noah, Daniel, and Job**, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall *but* deliver their own souls by **their righteousness**" (Eze 14:14,20). God had told Noah, "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for **thee have I seen righteous before me** in this generation" (Gen 7:1). Noah wasn't absolutely righteous, but he was "seen righteous" before God, or considered to be righteous and treated like he was. Of Job and Daniel it was said, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, **a perfect and an upright man**, one that **feareth God, and escheweth evil?**" (Job 1:8; 2:3); "O Daniel, a man **greatly beloved**" (Dan 10:11). Noah, Job, and Daniel weren't without sin, but were seen or considered righteous by trusting and obeying God.

Jesus Christ Himself and His apostles attested to people that were considered righteous before God: "Then **Joseph** her husband, being **a just man**" (Mat 1:19); "That many **prophets and righteous men** have desired to see *those things* which ye see" (Mat 13:17); "That upon you may come all **the righteous blood** shed upon the earth, from the blood of **righteous Abel** unto the blood of **Zacharias son of Barachias**" (Mat 23:35); "a certain priest named **Zacharias**, of the course of Abia: and his wife *was* of the daughters of Aaron, and her name *was* **Elisabeth**. And they were **both righteous before God**, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luk 1:5,6); "By faith [*faithfulness*] **Abel** offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that **he was righteous**" (Heb 11:4); "And delivered **just Lot**, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For **that righteous man** dwelling among them" (2Pe 2:7-8).

Peter made this conclusion about God's righteousness concerning all people, "But in **every nation** he that feareth him, and **worketh righteousness**, is accepted with him" (Act 10:35). To "work righteousness" isn't being absolutely righteous without having ever sinned. Christ stated, "That except **your righteousness** shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat 5:20). By "your righteousness," He meant living to the standard of righteousness He taught in that very Sermon on the Mount. His expression "your righteousness" is equivalent to that used of God's people, "our righteousness" (Deu 6:25), and of Noah, Daniel, and Job, "their righteousness" (Eze 14:14,20).

## David's writings

"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes." (vs. 11-18).

Paul now quotes a laundry list of sins from the Scriptures to prove "both Jews and Gentiles [*Greeks*], that they are all under sin" (v. 9). It's no coincidence that he quoted David earlier, "that thou mightest be justified when

thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest” (Psa 51:4), and that almost all of these quotes are also from David: “The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Psa 14:2-3); “God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Psa 53:2-3); “their throat *is* an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue” (Psa 5:9); “adders’ poison *is* under their lips” (Psa 140:3); “His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud” (Psa 10:7); “For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood” (Pro 1:16); “Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts *are* thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction *are* in their paths. The way of peace they know not” (Isa 59:7-8); “*there is* no fear of God before his eyes” (Psa 36:1).

There’s a significance in David being the one who wrote these concluding statements in the Scriptures that all are under sin. Of course part of the reason is that he was proven of having sinned greatly in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba. But there’s another compelling reason—he proved through his writings that God’s intent of fulfilling His promise to Abraham hadn’t changed regardless of the law having been added some 430 years later. Paul’s Jewish adversaries that rejected Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah argued that the law itself was the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. But what David said about 500 years after the law was given, set the record straight. God brought His people out of Egypt to live righteously in the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But now that they were settled in the land centuries later, they weren’t living righteously but sinfully. David’s writings indicted not only all of them but also himself!

The writer of Hebrews, quoted from the promise God made to Abraham, “**By myself have I sworn** ... That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed” (Gen 22:16,17), “For **when God made promise to Abraham**, because he could swear by no greater, **he swore by himself**, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee” (Heb 6:13-14). He then proceeded to explain that God hadn’t changed His original intent of fulfilling that promise, “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise **the immutability [ametathetos 276] of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath**: That by **two immutable [ametathetos 276] things**, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb 6:17-18). The Greek adjective *ametathetos* means “changeless” or “unalterable.” There were two things God did to give us assurance or “a strong consolation” that He would fulfil His promise to Abraham in exactly the way He said—initially swearing by Himself to keep that promise, and later confirming it by an oath.

Paul’s last words written to Timothy, “Remember that **Jesus Christ of the seed of David** was raised from the dead **according to my gospel** ... *It is* a faithful saying: For if we be dead with *him*, we shall also live with *him*: if we suffer, we shall also reign with *him*: **if we deny him, he also will deny us**: If we believe [*trust*] not, yet **he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself**” (2Ti 2:8,11-13). If we deny that Jesus is the Christ, He absolutely will deny us and we will perish. Since He swore to Abraham by Himself, He would have to deny Himself to save anyone in any other way than what He promised to Abraham. He was faithful to keep what He promised, “he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself.” Therefore, He won’t be denied, we will be.

In addition to swearing by Himself to Abraham, God also later confirmed an oath to David, “**The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent**, Thou *art* a priest for ever **after the order of Melchizedek**” (Psa 110:4), “For those priests were made without an oath; but this **with an oath** by him that said unto him, **The Lord swore and will not repent [metamelomai 3338]**, Thou *art* a priest for ever **after the order of Melchisedec**” (Heb 7:21). The

Greek verb *metamelomai* means “to change” or “to alter.” It’s equivalent to the negative adjective *ametathetos* for “immutable” which is “changeless” or “unalterable.” The oath spoken through David is the second of the “two immutable [*ametathetos* 276] things.” He was saying that He swore the promise by Himself to Abraham about a thousand years earlier “By myself have I sworn” (Gen 22:16), and the fulfillment of what He had sworn hadn’t at all changed, “The Lord swears and will not repent.” The law being interjected about halfway between the promise and the oath had no bearing whatsoever upon what God had promised. David’s writings after the law proved that the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham before the law hadn’t changed—it wasn’t by the law, but by His Son to come.

The oath, “Thou *art* a priest for ever **after the order of Melchizedek**” (Psa 110:4; Heb 7:17,21), is “after the order,” in the sense of “arrangement,” “design,” or “pattern” of Melchizedek, “And Melchizedek king of Salem **brought forth bread and wine**; and he *was* the priest of the most high God” (Gen 14:18). This foretold of what Jesus would bring forth, “And as they were eating, **Jesus took bread**, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; **this is my body**. **And he took the cup**, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For **this is my blood** of the new testament [*covenant*], which is shed for many **for the remission of sins**.” (Mat 26:26-28). Symbolically, the bread *is* His body and the wine *is* His blood. And only His blood can actually remit sins. Therefore, the Sacrifice for our sins isn’t the blood of animals given hundreds of years later through Moses, but the body and blood of Christ shown figuratively by Abraham partaking of the Lord’s Supper with Melchizedek!

## The tongue is a little member

“**Their throat** is an open sepulchre; with **their tongues** they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under **their lips**: **Whose mouth** *is* full of cursing and bitterness” (vs. 13-14). It’s noteworthy that in this list of sins quoted from David, there are several statements about one particular part of the body—the tongue! James used the example of horses and ships to teach about the tongue, “Behold, we put **bits in the horses’ mouths**, that they may obey us; and we **turn about their whole body**. Behold also **the ships**, which though *they be* so great, and *are* driven of fierce winds, yet are they **turned about with a very small helm**, whithersoever the governor listeth.” (Jas 3:3-4). Horses and ships were the main modes of travel in that day. And as their final destination is determined by relatively small devices—bits and helms—as compared with what was being steered, so it is with our final destination, “**Even so the tongue is a little member**, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And **the tongue** *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: **so is the tongue among our members**, that it defileth **the whole body**, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and **it is set on fire of hell** [*geenna* 1067]” (Jas 3:5-6). The tongue is a relatively small member of our body yet leads the whole body on a straight course to *geenna* or the lake of fire, “And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and **cool my tongue**; for I am **tormented in this flame**” (Luk 16:24).

## The Scripture has concluded all under sin

This list of sins from David’s writings is what Paul meant when writing to the Galatians, “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin” (Gal 3:22). And there’s a reason the Scriptures concluded all have sinned, “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, **that the promise by faith** [*faithfulness*] of Jesus Christ might be given

**to them that believe [trust],**” “because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” (NET). God concluded all under sin so that the promise He made to Abraham, fulfilled by Jesus Christ’s faithfulness, might be given to those that trust Him. But this isn’t what’s being taught today.

The “gospel” message today is essentially informing people that they have sinned, “all under sin” (v. 9), “For all have sinned” (v. 23), then instructing them to be saved by believing, “The just shall live by faith” (1:17), “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (10:9). But this isn’t what Paul taught in Romans. His gospel message was that God concluded all under sin so that all can be saved by Jesus Christ’s faithfulness, and Jesus Christ’s faithfulness was the fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham. There is no other gospel than the gospel that was preached to Abraham, “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith [*faithfulness*], **preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying,** In thee shall all nations be blessed” (Gal 3:8). It’s not about our faith, but Jesus Christ’s faithfulness.

## All the world became guilty

“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, **it saith to them who are under the law:** that every mouth may be stopped, and **all the world may become guilty before God**” (v. 19). It goes without saying that the Scriptures are speaking directly to God’s people, “them who are under the law.” But through indicting every one of His people with the guilt of sin, by transmission God relegated all the world guilty of sin. Paul will give more explanation about this later, “Wherefore, as **by one man** sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so **death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:** (For until the law sin was in the world: but **sin is not imputed when there is no law**” (5:12-13). Nobody questions that Adam was guilty of sin and worthy of death being sentenced upon him, but how is God just in passing that same judgment upon everyone else? It’s because “for that all have sinned” (5:12), which Paul was simply quoting his own conclusion here, “all under sin” (v. 9), “all have sinned” (v. 23). Since God would later prove through the law that all are guilty of sin, He was therefore just in passing judgment upon all in the beginning. Although “sin is not imputed when there is no law” and most people who’ve lived never lived under the law, yet all people die because God’s people were proven worthy of death, “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death” (1:32).

The sense is that if given the same blessings and favor as His own people had been given, all other people would have also sinned. God’s people were somewhat of a case group to prove that all people would have done likewise. If they came up short even with every advantage to succeed, then all others with less advantage come short of God’s glory as well.

## The actions of the law

“Therefore **by the deeds [ergon 2041] of the law** there shall no flesh [*sarx* 4561] be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin” (v. 20). Because there are two main distinctions within the law of Moses—the moral *righteousness* of the law, and the non-moral *actions* of the law—in this chapter the actions of the law, “the deeds [ergon 2041] of the law” (v. 20), “By what law? of works [ergon 2041]?” (v. 27), “without the deeds [ergon 2041] of the law” (v. 28), are simply the actions of the Levitical priests offering animal sacrifices.

In the letter to the Hebrews, “dead actions” were the actions of the high priest on Yom Kippur, the annual Day of Atonement. This is what is meant by, “not laying again the foundation of **repentance from dead [nekros 3498] works [ergon 2041]**, and of faith [*faithfulness*] toward God, Of the doctrine of **baptisms [baptismos 909]**, and of **laying on of hands**” (Heb 6:1-2). The high priest would “wash his flesh in water” (Lev 16:4), “wash his flesh with water” (Lev 16:24), both before and after the ritual on that day. This is the “baptisms [*baptismos* 909]” or washings. He would then sprinkle the blood of the goat for the sin offering upon the mercy seat in the most holy place, “Then shall he **kill the goat of the sin offering**, that is for the people, and **bring his blood** within the vail, and **do with that blood** as he did with the blood of the bullock, and **sprinkle it upon the mercy seat**, and before **the mercy seat**” (Lev 16:15). After that he would lay his hands on the head of the other goat, confessing the sins of the people over him before sending him out into the desert, “And Aaron shall **lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat**, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send *him* away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness” (Lev 16:21). This is the “laying on of hands.”

This annual Day of Atonement is described later in Hebrews in more detail, “But into the second *went* the high priest alone **once every year**” (Heb 9:7), “the high priest entereth into the holy place **every year**” (Heb 9:25). The “dead actions” on that day are the meats, drinks, washings, sacrifices, and laying on of hands, “*Which stood* only in **meats and drinks**, and divers **washings [baptismos 909]** ... For if **the blood of bulls and of goats**, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall **the blood of Christ**, who through the eternal Spirit [*breath*] **offered himself without spot to God**, purge your conscience from **dead [nekros 3498] works [ergon 2041]** to serve the living God?” (Heb 9:10,13-14). These actions are “dead” because they can never take away sins, “For *it is not possible* that the blood of bulls and of goats should **take away sins**” (Heb 10:4), “offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can **never take away sins**” (Heb 10:11). Christ’s actions, on the other hand, in offering Himself to God as our Sacrifice, “the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit [*breath*] offered himself without spot to God,” remits or takes away our sins.

The Hebrew verb *kāpar* means literally “to cover” or “to conceal,” and figuratively “to appease” or “to pacify.” It’s used both ways in its first two appearances in the Old Testament. The first time it’s the literal covering over the wood of the ark with pitch, “Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt **pitch [kāpar 3722]** it within and without with pitch” (Gen 6:14). And the second time it’s figurative for the appeasing of Esau’s anger with a gift before Jacob met him face to face, “Behold, thy servant Jacob *is* behind us. For he said, I will **appease [kāpar 3722]** him with the present that goeth before me, and afterward I will see his face; peradventure he will accept of me” (Gen 32:20).

This word appears approximately 100 times in the Old Testament and is translated in the KJV as “atonement” around 70 of those times. In Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers particularly, it speaks of the blood of animals covering sins. Therefore, the law itself attested that animal sacrifices didn’t “take away sins” (Heb 10:4,11), but only covered them, like Noah covering the wood of the ark with pitch! The blood of animals was simply a means of appeasing or pacifying God’s anger until the blood of His Son would completely satisfy Him.

When God’s people were truly repentant of their sins and striving to live righteously before Him with a pure heart, the blood of animals appeased and pacified His wrath. However, when they were living sinfully and offering sacrifices ritualistically, their sacrifices meant nothing to Him: “Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *and*

to hearken than the fat of rams.” (1Sa 15:22); “The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD” (Pro 15:8); “The sacrifice of the wicked *is* abomination” (Pro 21:27); “To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats” (Isa 1:11); “your burnt offerings *are* not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me” (Jer 6:20); “I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies” (Amo 5:21).

## No flesh justified in His sight

“Therefore by the deeds [*actions*] of the law there shall **no flesh [sarx 4561] be justified in his sight**: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin” (v. 20). Paul used *sarx* for “flesh” in Romans several different ways: the outward physical body, “outward in the flesh [sarx 4561]” (2:28), “the infirmity of your flesh [sarx 4561]” (6:19), “weak through the flesh [sarx 4561]” (8:3); an expression for those living under the law but without God’s breath in their hearts, “in the flesh [sarx 4561]” (7:5,8:8,9), “with the flesh [sarx 4561]” (7:25), “after the flesh [sarx 4561]” (8:1,4,5,13); the biological, cultural, and ethnic distinctions between God’s people and all other people, “according to the flesh [sarx 4561]” (1:3), “my kinsmen according to the flesh [sarx 4561] ... concerning the flesh [sarx 4561]” (9:3,5), “*them which are my flesh [sarx 4561]*” (11:14).

That “no flesh [sarx 4561]” shall be justified in God’s sight emphasizes God’s own people among all biological, cultural, and ethnic people groups. The non-moral “deeds [*actions*] of the law” are what were required by circumcision which concerned meats, drinks, holy days, feasts, tithing, and animal sacrifices. But if God’s own people aren’t justified by the actions of the law given to them by God Himself, then no other people are justified by those actions either.

Paul declared to the Galatians, “**Behold, I Paul say unto you**, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing” (Gal 5:2). As if to say “Look at who’s talking to you!” “If I myself—a biological descendant of Israel, circumcised the eighth day, and keeping the actions of the law my entire life—couldn’t be justified by those actions, do you really think that you—Gentiles becoming circumcised as adults—can be justified by such actions going forward?” Whereas “I Paul” began “by the flesh” and was made complete “in the breath,” how can you accomplish it the other way around, “Are ye so foolish? **having begun in the Spirit [breath]**, are ye now **made perfect [complete] by the flesh [sarx 4561]?**” (Gal 3:3)?

To be “justified in his sight” is what Paul meant by “the righteousness of God” (1:17, 3:5,21,22, 10:3), “his righteousness” (3:25,26), “God’s righteousness” (10:3). It’s not the things we consider right: “every man whatsoever *is* right in his own eyes” (Deu 12:8); “every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes” (Jdg 17:6,21:25); “The way of a fool *is* right in his own eyes” (Pro 12:15); “Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes” (Pro 21:2); “All the ways of a man *are* clean in his own eyes” (Pro 16:2). It’s the things God considers right: “to do *that which is* right in the eyes of the LORD thy God” (Deu 13:18); “to do *that which is* right in mine eyes” (1Ki 11:33); “to do *that only which was* right in mine eyes” (1Ki 14:8); “David did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD” (1Ki 15:5); “Asa did *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD” (1Ki 15:11); “doing *that which was* right in the eyes of the LORD” (1Ki 22:43); “executing *that which is* right in mine eyes” (2Ki 10:30); “Asa did *that which was* good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God” (2Ch 14:2).

David did what was right in God’s sight: “walk in my ways, and do *that is right in my sight*, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as **David** my servant did” (1Ki 11:38); “my servant **David**, who kept my

commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do *that* only *which was right in mine eyes*" (1Ki 14:8); "**David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD**, and turned not aside from any *thing* that he commanded him all the days of his life, **save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite**" (1Ki 15:5). Except for his sin in the matter of Uriah, David did what was right before God. However, he didn't always keep the actions of the law. On one occasion he ate hallowed bread, "How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? (Mat 12:4). And even when he repented of his sin against Uriah, he didn't offer an animal sacrifice, "For thou desirest **not sacrifice; else would I give it**: thou delightest not in burnt offering" (Psa 51:16).

When confronted by the Pharisees for having eaten with Gentiles and for instructing His disciples to work on the Sabbath, Christ responded both times by quoting from Hosea: "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" (Mat 9:11), "But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Mat 9:13); "Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day" (Mat 12:2), "But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Mat 12:7). The gospel message Jesus Christ Himself preached is that showing mercy to people, not keeping the actions of the law, is what God desires, "For **I desired mercy, and not sacrifice**; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos 6:6).

## By the law is the knowledge of sin

"Therefore by the deeds [*actions*] of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for **by the law is the knowledge of sin**" (v. 20). The law, as Paul states here and several times later in his letter that the law gave God's people the knowledge of sin: "by the law *is* the knowledge of sin" (v. 20); "where no law is, *there is* no transgression" (4:15); "sin is not imputed when there is no law" (5:13); "the law entered, that the offence might abound" (5:20); "I had not known sin, but by the law" (7:7).

Since "by the law *is* the knowledge of sin," then by the law "there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." That the actions of the law won't justify any flesh in God's sight was proven by those actions not justifying His own people. Since centuries after the law was given none were righteous before God according to David, then their actions of offering animal sacrifices didn't take away their sins.

## The righteousness of God without the law

"But now **the righteousness of God without the law** is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets" (v. 21). Toward the beginning of his letter Paul had stated "For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ** ... For therein is **the righteousness of God** revealed" (1:16,17). The gospel Jesus Christ Himself preached revealed God's righteousness. And Paul is now going to teach about the righteousness of God in detail through these next few verses, "the righteousness of God" (vs. 21,22), "his righteousness" (vs. 25,26). Israel hadn't submitted themselves to God's righteousness as Paul will state later, "For they being ignorant of **God's righteousness**, and going about to establish **their own righteousness**, have not submitted themselves unto **the righteousness of God**" (10:3). They were trying to establish their own way of being right with God rather than submitting themselves to the way God Himself established and accepts. They needed to learn His way—the way His Son preached—then submit to it to be saved, "that they might be saved" (10:1).

The “righteousness of God without the law” is God’s righteousness without the animal sacrifices commanded under the law. However, because the two main distinctions of the law—the moral *righteousness* of the law, and the non-moral *actions* of the law—aren’t being distinguished but conflated as simply the moral *righteousness* of the law, therefore “the righteousness of God without the law” is being taught today that God’s righteousness is without morally righteous living but simply believing. But the context is clearly “the deeds [*actions*] of the law” (v. 20), the actions of the Levitical priests offering sacrifices for their own sins and for the sins of the people. That God’s righteousness is “without the law” is that it’s not by animal sacrifices prescribed by the law but by the Sacrifice of God’s own Son.

## Being witnessed by the law

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, **being witnessed by the law and the prophets**” (v. 21). God’s righteousness “being witnessed by the law and the prophets” is that the law and the prophets testified that animal sacrifices never pleased God. “For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it*: thou delightest not in burnt offering” (Psa 51:16); “The sacrifice of the wicked *is* an abomination to the LORD” (Pro 15:8); “The sacrifice of the wicked *is* abomination” (Pro 21:27); “To what purpose *is* the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats” (Isa 1:11); “your burnt offerings *are* not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me” (Jer 6:20); “Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?” (Mic 6:7).

Also, God’s righteousness “being witnessed by the law and the prophets” is that the law and the prophets foretold of the coming sacrifice of God’s own Son. Moses’ first writing of the law alone contains many undeniable prophecies. God said in the beginning that the Seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head, “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and **her seed; it shall bruise thy head**, and thou shalt **bruise his heel**” (Gen 3:15). Abraham’s two sons by two women foretold figuratively of the Old and New Covenants that would come from Abraham, “Abraham had **two sons**, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman ... Which things are **an allegory**: for these are **the two covenants**” (Gal 4:22,24). Also, Abraham’s “sacrifice” of his son prefigured God’s sacrifice of His, “My son, **God will provide himself a lamb** for a burnt offering” (Gen 22:8). And Joseph’s life recorded in Genesis chapters 37-45 was allegorical and prophetic of Jesus Christ’s life.

Within the Levitical sacrificial system of the law, there were many types of the true Sacrifice of God’s Son to come, particularly the mercy seat upon which the blood of animals was sprinkled, “And he shall take of **the blood** of the bullock, and **sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat** eastward; and **before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood** with his finger seven times ... **do with that blood** as he did with the blood of the bullock, and **sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat**” (Lev 16:14,15). This was simply a type based upon God’s instructions for Moses to make everything pertaining to that sacrificial system after the pattern He showed to him: “And look that thou make *them* **after their pattern**, which was **shewed thee** in the mount” (Exo 25:40); “**according to the fashion** thereof which was **shewed thee** in the mount” (Exo 26:30); “**according unto the pattern** which the LORD had **shewed Moses**” (Num 8:4); “Who serve unto the example and **shadow of heavenly things**, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things **according to the pattern shewed to thee** in the mount” (Heb 8:5). Now, although the Old Covenant came chronologically before the New Covenant, the New

wasn't patterned after the Old but the Old after the New. The Old owed its existence to the New and not the other way around. Without the New there wouldn't have been the Old.

The prophets also wrote many specific prophecies about Jesus Christ—His birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification: “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [*the grave*]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psa 16:10); “they pierced my hands and my feet ... They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (Psa 22:16,18); “Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men” (Psa 68:18); “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool” (Psa 110:1); “the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict *her* by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Isa 9:1-2); “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (Isa 50:6); “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he *was* wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” (Isa 53:4-5); “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting” (Mic 5:2).

## The faithfulness of Jesus Christ

“Even the righteousness of God *which is* by **faith [pistis 4102] of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that believe [*pisteuō* 4100]: for there is no difference” (v. 22). The Greek *pistis* isn't “faith” but “faithfulness.” Therefore the “faith [*faithfulness*] of Jesus Christ,” isn't about our faith in Jesus Christ, but Jesus Christ's faithfulness to God, “the righteousness of God through **the faithfulness of Jesus Christ**” (NET). But because the faithfulness of Jesus Christ is being obscured in most all translations by rendering *pistis* as “faith,” nearly everyone has bought into the falsehood that salvation is by faith or believing.

Paul's letter to the Romans isn't about the righteousness of God by faith, but the righteousness of God by the faithfulness of God and His Son Jesus Christ, “the righteous person will live by **his faithfulness**” (Hab 2:4 NIV), “The just shall live by faith [*faithfulness*]” (1:17). In chapter three, however, the faithfulness of Jesus Christ is mistranslated in almost all Bible versions except for the New English Translation, “the righteousness of God through **the faithfulness of Jesus Christ** ... the justifier of the one who lives because of **Jesus' faithfulness**” (vs. 22,26 NET).

That Christ's “faithfulness” is what Paul was emphasizing, indicates that everything Christ did and said was His Father's will and not His own. To be faithful, loyal, or trustworthy, is simply to do exactly what one was sent to do. The Son of God was absolutely faithful to His Father as John recorded in his Gospel: “the Word was God” (1:1); “I and *my* Father are one” (10:30); “the Father *is* in me, and I in him” (10:38); “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ... I am in the Father, and the Father in me” (14:9,10); “thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee ... we are one” (17:21,22). He always did the will of His Father: “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me” (4:34); “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (5:30); “not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (6:38); “I do always those things that please him” (8:29). And He always spoke what His Father had sent Him to speak: “he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God” (3:34); “My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me” (7:16); “as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things” (8:28); “I speak that which I have seen with my Father” (8:38); “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father

which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (12:49); “the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself” (14:10); “I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me” (17:8).

This is the understanding of John’s famous introductory statement to his Gospel, “**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** The same was in the beginning with God.” (Jhn 1:1-2). The “word” is the gospel message of salvation God hid in a mystery by figurative language within the literal events of the creation narrative. The Son of God came into this world and performed that “word” or message that was from the beginning so perfectly that He can be called metaphorically “the Word.” That “the Word was God” simply speaks of Him representing God perfectly. John wasn’t saying that the Son of God is literally God Himself, but that He was the equivalent of God on this earth by way of faithfully doing and saying everything God willed.

God the Father sent His Son into this world to do and speak as He had been sent. Therefore, to be right with God we must fully submit to His Son—obey what He commanded and agree with what He taught. Our only hope is listening to God’s Son. But if we won’t listen to Him, we’re completely hopeless.

## The promise through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ

“Even the righteousness of God *which is by faith [faithfulness] of Jesus Christ* unto all and upon all them that **believe [trust]**: for there is no difference: For **all have sinned**” (3:22-23). Paul wrote a parallel statement in his letter to the Galatians, “But the scripture hath concluded **all under sin**, that **the promise by faith [faithfulness] of Jesus Christ** might be given to them that **believe [trust]**” (Gal 3:22). Both are about Jesus Christ’s faithfulness, “through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” (Rom 3:22 NET), “because of the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” (Gal 3:22 NET). And it’s interesting to note, although purely coincidental, that not only both say the same thing but also both are 3:22!

The context of both statements is Abraham’s trust in God’s faithfulness to keep the promise He made to him and to his Seed: “**Abraham believed [trusted] God**, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (4:3); “For **the promise**, that he should be the heir of the world, **was not to Abraham, or to his seed**” (4:13); “**Abraham believed [trusted] God**, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (Gal 3:6); “Now **to Abraham and his seed** were **the promises** made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to **thy seed, which is Christ**” (Gal 3:16).

Paul was teaching that God’s righteousness comes by the promise He made to Abraham, and He was faithful to keep that promise by His Son’s Sacrifice for our sins. But before sending His Son, God testified in the Scriptures that all—Jews, Greeks, and everyone else—had sinned, “But the scripture hath concluded all under sin.” He did this, not to condemn everyone but to save everyone, “For God sent not his Son into the world **to condemn the world**; but that the world through him **might be saved**” (Jhn 3:17). Therefore, in both letters, “**by faith [faithfulness] of Jesus Christ** unto all and upon all them that **believe [trust]**: for there is no difference: For **all have sinned**” (vs. 22,23), “**all under sin**, that the promise by **faith [faithfulness] of Jesus Christ** might be given to them that **believe [trust]**” (Gal 3:22), since all have sinned, then all can trust God for salvation through His Son’s faithfulness to die for their sins. And the only way of salvation is by knowing and submitting to His righteousness—the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham through the faithfulness of Him

and His Son. That as “Abraham believed [*trusted*] God” (4:3; Gal 3:6), we also can trust God. And as God counted Abraham right with Him because he submitted to His way of righteousness, so it is with us.

## There is no difference

“Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith [*faithfulness*] of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe [*pisteuō* 4100]: **for there is no difference: For all have sinned**, and come short of the glory [*doxa* 1391] of God” (vs. 22-23). Paul’s statement “for there is no difference,” in context, is that there’s no difference between Jews and Greeks, “No, in no wise: for we have before proved **both Jews and Gentiles [*hellēn* 1672], that they are all under sin**” (v. 9). He even quoted his own statement “for there is no difference” later in his letter and stated clearly that it’s between the Jews and the Greeks, “**For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek [*hellēn* 1672]:** for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” (10:12). And he also compared the two earlier in his letter, “to every one that believeth [*trusts*]; **to the Jew first**, and also **to the Greek [*hellēn* 1672]**” (1:16), “upon every soul of man that doeth evil, **of the Jew first**, and also **of the Gentile [*hellēn* 1672]** ... to every man that worketh good, **to the Jew first**, and also **to the Gentile [*hellēn* 1672]**” (2:9-10). By proving all have sinned, God provided all with salvation. Since there’s no difference in the sinfulness of all, then there’s no difference in the salvation of all.

## Come short of the glory of God

The statement “For all have sinned, and **come short of the glory [*doxa* 1391] of God**” (v. 23), could mean either coming short of giving to God glory, or coming short of receiving glory from God. We tend to default to the former because wanting to give glory to God makes us look humble before others, while wanting to get glory from God sounds selfish. However, if we’re concerned about our image before people, we’re actually accomplishing neither—we’re neither giving glory to God nor receiving glory from God. But the correct understanding of what Paul wrote, is the one Paul meant.

The gospel Jesus Christ preached, “How can ye believe, which receive **honour [*doxa* 1391] one of another**, and **seek not the honour [*doxa* 1391] that cometh from God only?**” (Jhn 5:44), is that we should seek glory, honor, and praise from God, and not from people. John stated the same, “For they loved **the praise [*doxa* 1391] of men** more than **the praise [*doxa* 1391] of God**” (Jhn 12:43). And this was also Paul’s gospel. The context leading up to his statement “come short of the glory [*doxa* 1391] of God,” is that of seeking glory and praise from God: “To them who by patient continuance in well doing **seek for glory [*doxa* 1391]** and honour and immortality, eternal life ... But **glory [*doxa* 1391]**, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile” (2:7,10), “But he *is* a Jew [*praise*], which is one inwardly [*secretly*]; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit [*breath*], *and* not in the letter; **whose praise is not of men, but of God**” (2:29). However, Paul also used Abraham as our example of giving glory to God, “was strong in faith [*faithfulness*], **giving glory [*doxa* 1391] to God**” (4:20), but then concluded that we “rejoice in hope of **the glory [*doxa* 1391] of God**” (5:2), that we hope in anticipation of the glory we’ll receive from God.

Whether Paul meant giving glory to God or receiving glory from God by “come short of the glory [*doxa* 1391] of God,” is debatable. In fact, he might have even meant both. But if it is one or the other, the weight of the context and the conclusion favors the latter. It’s that since we all have sinned, then we all come short of

receiving any glory, honor, and praise from God. And this also makes the most sense leading into Paul's next point, "Being justified freely **by his grace [favor]** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (v. 24). It's by God's favor toward His people the Jews that they were given the means of receiving praise from God, "he is a Jew [praise] ... whose praise is not of men, but of God" (2:29).

## God's favor toward His people

"Being justified freely by **his grace [charis 5485]** through the **redemption [apolytrōsis 629]** that is in Christ Jesus" (v. 24). As learned back in chapter one, "By whom we have received **grace [charis 5485]**" (1:5), "**Grace [charis 5485]** to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:7), the Greek *charis* means "favor." It's God's favor toward His people above all other people as the word was used in the Greek Old Testament, "And how shall it surely be known, that both I and **this people have found favour [charis 5485] with thee**, except only if thou go with us? So both I and **thy people shall be glorified beyond all the nations**, as many as are upon the earth." (Exo 33:16-17 LXX Brenton).

The Greek noun *apolytrōsis* is "a release" or "a liberation" from a bondage, particularly that of a debt. It's essentially the payment of a debt. Paul used this word in a parallel statement made to the churches at Ephesus and Colossae, "In whom we have **redemption [apolytrōsis 629]** through his blood, the **forgiveness [aphesis 859] of sins**" (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14). The Greek noun *aphesis* is "a taking away" as in forgiveness. And the writer of Hebrews used this word when contrasting the blood of Jesus Christ with the blood of animals, "Now where **remission [aphesis 859]** of these is, *there is no more offering for sin*. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by **the blood of Jesus**" (Heb 10:18-19), "For *it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins* ... offering oftentimes **the same sacrifices**, which can never **take away sins**" (Heb 10:4,11). Only Christ's blood "takes away" and forgive sins.

The sense of "the redemption [apolytrōsis 629] that is in Christ Jesus" is that His blood paid for the sins of God's people that had never been "taken away" by the blood of animals, but had always remained before God as an unpaid debt. And the writer of Hebrews even stated this explicitly, "for **the redemption [apolytrōsis 629]** of the transgressions *that were* under the first testament [covenant]" (Heb 9:15). His blood redeemed the sins of God's people under the Old Covenant that had transgressed or broke His commandments. This redemption in Christ Jesus is what Paul is going to explain shortly about God having "passed over" those unresolved transgressions that were left unpaid.

## God's mercy seat

"Whom God hath set forth *to be* a **propitiation [hilastērion 2435]** through faith [faithfulness] in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (v. 25). The Greek *hilastērion* appears only one other time in the New Testament, "And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing **the mercyseat [hilastērion 2435]**" (Heb 9:5). It's the mercy seat in the holiest place of the Tabernacle where the high priest would enter only once per year on *Yôm* [H3117] *Kāpār* [H3722] or Atonement Day, "But **into the second went the high priest alone once every year**, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people" (Heb 9:7), "the high priest entereth **into the holy place every year** with blood of others" (Heb 9:25).

Most Bible versions render *hilastērion* here as “atonement,” “expiation,” or “propitiation” although a few state it correctly: “God presented him as the mercy seat by his blood” (CSB); “Whom God has sent forth a mercy-seat” (DARBY); “as a sacrifice of atonement; or as the mercy seat” (EXB); “whom God made publicly available as the mercy seat” (LEB); “God publicly displayed him at his death as the mercy seat” (NET); “Him God has made a seat of mercy” (NMB); “whom God did set forth a mercy seat” (YLT). By translating *hilastērion* as “propitiation,” “atonement,” or “expiation,” the understanding of what Paul was communicating in this passage is lost.

That Paul was teaching the true mercy seat of which Christ is the true High Priest is evident by what he will state later in his letter, “For **what the law could not do**, in that it was **weak through the flesh**, God sending his own Son **in the likeness of sinful flesh**, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (8:3). What “the law could not do” was remit our sins because “it was weak through the flesh.” It was weak because the high priests themselves were powerless to overcome death, “For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for **the weakness and unprofitableness thereof** ... And they truly were **many priests**, because they were not suffered to continue **by reason of death**” (Heb 7:18,23). And it was weak because the high priests were sinful themselves, “But into the second *went the high priest* alone once every year, not without blood, which **he offered for himself**” (Heb 9:7). The “likeness of sinful flesh” is the sinfulness of those high priests. God sent His Son “for sin” or for the purpose of condemning “sin in the flesh” as a flesh and blood human being without sin.

## Christ’s faithfulness to shed His blood

“Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation [*mercy seat*] **through faith [faithfulness] in his blood**, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God” (v. 25). That “through faith [*faithfulness*] in his blood” is about Jesus Christ’s faithfulness and not our faith, is attested by the context, “through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ” (v. 22 NET), “because of Jesus’ faithfulness” (v. 26 NET). But almost every Bible version has some form of “faith in his blood,” “faith in Christ,” “faith in him,” “through faith,” “received by faith” “those who have faith” or “believe in him.” However, the Common English Bible, the Complete Jewish Bible, and the New Testament for Everyone—which I can’t quote any of them because of copyright restrictions—have it correctly as “faithfulness.”

This verse isn’t about us having faith or belief in His blood, but about Him being faithful to His Father in shedding His blood. Paul is going to explain this in more detail later in his letter, that hidden in a mystery within Moses’ last words before his death was a prophecy about the faithfulness of Jesus Christ and the gospel message His apostles would preach, “But the righteousness which is of **faith [faithfulness]** speaketh on this wise ... **that is**, to bring Christ down *from above* ... **that is**, to bring up Christ again from the dead ... **that is**, the word [*rhēma* 4487] of faith [*faithfulness*], which we preach” (10:6,7,8). The three times Paul says “that is” indicates a correlation—that Moses’ statement corresponds to its fulfillment in Christ and to the preaching of the gospel by His apostles. In other words, Moses asking “Who shall ascend into heaven?” is “bring Christ down *from above*,” and “Who shall descend into the deep?” is “bring up Christ again from the dead,” and the statement “The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart” is the gospel message of Christ’s faithfulness His apostles were now preaching, “the word [*rhēma* 4487] of faith [*faithfulness*], which we preach.”

The Greek noun *rhēma* is “a speech,” “a discourse,” or “an utterance.” Here, it’s a speech about Jesus Christ’s faithfulness that Paul was preaching. Therefore, when he concluded, “So then **faith [faithfulness] cometh by hearing**, and hearing by **the word [rhēma 4487] of God**” (10:17), it was about hearing this discourse about Christ’s faithfulness from a preacher, “how shall they hear without a preacher?” (10:14). Hearing of Christ’s faithfulness comes by the preacher preaching about His faithfulness, “the word [rhēma 4487] of faith [faithfulness], which we preach.”

## God “passed over” the sins of His people

“Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation [*mercy seat*] through faith [faithfulness] in his blood, to declare **his righteousness for the remission [paresis 3929] of sins that are past**, through the forbearance of God” (v. 25). Animal sacrifices could never take sins away, “*it is not possible* that the blood of bulls and of goats should **take away [aphaireō 851] sins**” (Heb 10:4), “offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which **can never take away [periaireō 4014] sins**” (Heb 10:11). The Greek noun *paresis* is mistranslated here as “remission.” It actually means “a passing over,” “a disregarding,” or “a letting go.” The English *paresis* which is “a paralysis” or “an impairment” is derived from it. The Passover during the Exodus taught this principle to God’s people: “when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, **the LORD will pass over** the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite *you*” (Exo 12:23), “It is the sacrifice of **the LORD’S passover, who passed over** the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses” (Exo 12:27). This was just one of many ways that “the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ” (Gal 3:24). Its types and figures taught God’s people about the true Sacrifice to come.

Now, Paul’s adversaries would argue that if animal sacrifices didn’t actually pay for sins then it would make God unrighteous because He would have left sins unpunished yet saved people anyway. But Paul was arguing that in God’s forbearance, He “passed over” the sins of His people, anticipating His Son’s sacrifice would pay for those sins later. Therefore, God vindicated Himself as righteous for having “passed over” those sins because He didn’t leave them unpaid entirely but simply paid for them later.

The writer of Hebrews quoted Jeremiah’s prophecy about the New Covenant, “But this *shall be* **the covenant** that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ... **I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more**” (Jer 31:33,34), “This *is* **the covenant** that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And **their sins and iniquities will I remember no more**” (Heb 10:16-17). And he followed that quote stating, “Now where **remission [aphesis 859]** of these *is, there is no more offering for sin*” (Heb 10:18). The Greek noun *aphesis* means “remission,” “discharge,” or “release.” Therefore, sins that have been remitted need no more offerings made. And Jesus Himself used this word for His blood remitting our sins under the New Covenant, “For this is **my blood of the new testament [covenant]**, which is shed for many for **the remission [aphesis 859] of sins**” (Mat 26:28), “And that repentance and **remission [aphesis 859] of sins** should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luk 24:47).

Peter and Paul both used this word in their preaching and teaching: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for **the remission [aphesis 859] of sins**” (Act 2:38); “for to give repentance to Israel, and **forgiveness [aphesis 859] of sins**” (Act 5:31); “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth [*trusts*] in him shall receive **remission [aphesis 859] of sins**” (Act 10:43); “that

through this man is preached unto you the **forgiveness [aphesis 859] of sins**” (Act 13:38); “that they may receive **forgiveness [aphesis 859] of sins**” (Act 26:18); “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the **forgiveness [aphesis 859] of sins**” (Eph 1:7); “In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the **forgiveness [aphesis 859] of sins**” (Col 1:14).

## Sins that are past

“Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation [*mercy seat*] through faith [*faithfulness*] in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission [*passing over*] of **sins that are past**, through the forbearance of God” (v. 25). Under the Old Covenant, only one day of the year the high priest sprinkled the blood of a bull and a goat on the mercy seat in the holiest place of the Tabernacle, “the blood of the bullock, and **sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat** ... kill the goat of the sin offering, that *is* for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and **sprinkle it upon the mercy seat**, and before **the mercy seat**” (Lev 16:14,15). Atonement Day was a ceremonial atonement for the sins of God’s people that had been committed over the entire previous year, “For **on that day** shall *the priest* make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, *that* ye may be **clean from all your sins** before the LORD ... to make an atonement for the children of Israel **for all their sins once a year**” (Lev 16:30,34). Of course, this was only a type of the true, “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, *which are the figures of the true*; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb 9:24). But as with the true, the type indicated a redeeming of past sins—the sins of God’s people over the past year. Atonement Day included a “passing over” of sins, God “passing over” the sins of the previous year to “atone” for them on this one day.

“And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of **the transgressions that were under the first testament**, they which are called might receive **the promise of eternal [aiōnios 166] inheritance**” (Heb 9:15). The Greek adjective *aiōnios* in this statement from Hebrews doesn’t mean “eternal” as in “without end” or “never ceasing.” Most of the 70 times this word is used in the New Testament it’s incorrectly translated as “eternal,” “everlasting,” or “forever.” That it *doesn’t* mean “without end” is shown by a few times where it *can’t* mean that: “according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret **since the world began [aiōnios 166]**” (16:25); “In hope of eternal [*aiōnios* 166] life, which God, that cannot lie, promised **before the world [aiōnios 166] began**” (Tit 1:2); “For perhaps he therefore departed for a season, that thou shouldest **receive him for ever [aiōnios 166]**” (Phm 1:15).

It’s noun form *aiōn* appears almost 130 times and is usually translated as “forever” and even many times as “world.” But it’s simply “an age” as in “a period of time” or “an era” as it’s translated a couple of times, “That in the **ages [aiōn 165]** to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:7), “*Even* the mystery which hath been hid from **ages [aiōn 165]** and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints” (Col 1:26). But the undisputable proof that it *can’t* mean “without end” is that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself used it with an end! He used this word for the current age in which we live that most certainly will come to an end: “The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is **the end of the world [aiōn 165]**; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in **the end of this world [aiōn 165]** ... So shall it be at **the end of the world [aiōn 165]**” (Mat 13:39-40,49); “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto **the end of the world [aiōn 165]**” (Mat 28:20).

Now, the purpose in correctly defining *aiōnios* is to state that “the promise of eternal [*aiōnios* 166] inheritance” (Heb 9:15) isn’t about an inheritance that has no end, but an inheritance that has been enduring throughout the ages. And the promise is what the writer referred to earlier, “**For when God made promise to Abraham**, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee” (Heb 6:13-14). It’s the promise of the inheritance God made to Abraham that has endured throughout the ages, “For if **the inheritance** be of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but **God gave it to Abraham by promise**” (Gal 3:18).

Romans and Hebrews are teaching the same message about Jesus Christ’s faithfulness: “Whom God hath set forth *to be* a **propitiation [*hilastērion* 2435]** through faith [*faithfulness*] in his blood, to declare his righteousness for **the remission [*passing over*] of sins that are past**, through the forbearance of God” (v. 25); “**the mercyseat [*hilastērion* 2435]**” (Heb 9:5), “And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament [*covenant*], that by means of death, for **the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament [*covenant*]**, they which are called might receive **the promise of eternal [*age enduring*] inheritance**” (Heb 9:15). For God’s people to receive the promise of inheritance He made to Abraham, God “passed over” their sins while the fulfillment of His promise endured the ages until His Son finally came and remitted their sins.

## That He might be just

“**To declare [*endeixis* 1732], I say, at this time his righteousness**: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth [*pistis* 4102] in Jesus” (v. 26). Paul now repeats what he said in the previous verse, “**to declare [*endeixis* 1732] his righteousness**” (v. 25). The Greek noun *endeixis* is translated here as a verb “to declare,” but it’s actually “a proof” or “an evidence” as rendered the other two times this word is used, “Wherefore shew ye to them, and before the churches, the **proof [*endeixis* 1732]** of your love” (2Co 8:24), “And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an **evident token [*endeixis* 1732]** of perdition” (Phl 1:28). Many other Bible versions, on the other hand, have “to demonstrate” or “to prove.” It’s about God giving proof or evidence of His righteousness for having done what appeared to have been unrighteous, “To declare [*prove*], I say, at this time his righteousness ... to declare [*prove*] his righteousness.”

God’s people had wrongly assumed that the blood of animals took away sins for them to die forgiven. Because if the blood of animals didn’t take away sins, then everyone dies in their sins and perishes. But the writer of Hebrews stated plainly, “For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb 10:4). Since that’s true, that God’s people all died without their sins being taken away, then how could any of them be saved? Therefore, that “he might be just” is the question Paul is addressing. Since the blood of animals never took away sins, how was God just in passing over those past sins, “for the remission [*passing over*] of sins that are past” (v. 25)? In justifying us, God had to do it justly. And He would have been unjust had He forgave sins on the basis of the blood of animals. Since the blood of animals never took away sins, God would have been unjust in taking them away.

It’s now “at this time” that God gave proof of His righteousness, of His justness in passing over those past sins. And His proof was the Sacrifice of His Son, “But **God commendeth his love toward us**, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (5:8), “In this was **manifested the love of God toward us**, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1Jo 4:9). Although past sins had never been taken away, they were taken away now. Therefore, God was just in passing over them, forbearing

and refraining His wrath, “through the forbearance of God” (v. 25), to be unleashed upon His Son instead: “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him” (Isa 53:10); “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Mat 27:46; Mar 15:34); “For he hath made him *to be* sin for us” (2Co 5:21); “being made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13); given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour” (Eph 5:2).

## Jesus’ faithfulness

“To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which **believeth [pistis 4102] in Jesus**” (v. 26). The Greek noun *pistis* is mistranslated here as a verb “believe.” But it isn’t at all about us believing in Jesus but about “Jesus’ faithfulness” (NET). This is mistranslated in over 50 English Bible versions to indicate having faith, believing, or trusting in Jesus: “those who have faith in Jesus” (NIV); “the one who has faith in Jesus” (NKJV); “when they believe in Jesus” (NLT); “who puts his trust in Jesus (NLV). But there are, however, a few English versions that render it more accurately: “who has faith in Jesus [*or on the basis of Jesus’ faithfulness*]” (EXB); “because of Jesus’ faithfulness” (NET); “everyone who trusts in the faithfulness of Jesus” (NTE); and the Complete Jewish Bible which I can’t quote here because of copyright restrictions. It’s not about God justifying us on the basis of our faith but “on the basis of Jesus’ faithfulness” (EXB).

## Where is boasting then?

“**Where is boasting [kauchēsis 2746] then?** It is excluded. By what law? of works [*actions*]? Nay: but by the law of faith [*faithfulness*].” (v. 27). Earlier Paul stated that the Jews “makest thy boast [*kauchaomai* 2744] of God” (2:17), “makest thy boast [*kauchaomai* 2744] of the law” (2:23). The Greek noun for “boasting” is *kauchēsis* and verb is *kauchaomai*. They boasted of being superior to all other people because God had revealed Himself only to them: “Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship” (Jhn 4:22); “TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship” (Act 17:23); “in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God” (1Co 1:21); “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). “Where is boasting then?” hearkens back to what Paul asked earlier, “What then? are we better *than they*? “No, in no wise” (v. 9). The Jews can’t boast of being better than the Gentiles because their own Scriptures indicted “that they are all under sin” (v. 9), “For all have sinned” (v. 23).

## By what law?

“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. **By what law?** of works [*actions*]? Nay: but by the law of faith [*faithfulness*].” (v. 27). “By what law?” isn’t asking “By which law?” but “By what purpose of the law?” Is it by the purpose the Jews supposed that the law was an end in itself, or the purpose Paul declared later in his letter, “For **Christ is the end of the law** for righteousness to every one that believeth [*trusts*]” (10:4)? Christ is the end purpose for the law. Without His faithfulness to fulfill it, the law would have served no purpose. That it wasn’t “of actions” but “of faithfulness” is that the law wasn’t given for people to be justified by their actions of abstinence from unclean meats, keeping of holy days, and sacrificing animals, but to be justified by Christ’s faithfulness in giving Himself as the one and only Sacrifice for our sins.

## Not by actions of righteousness which we have done

When Paul wrote to Titus, “**Not by works [actions] of righteousness [dikaiosynē 1343]** which we have done, but **according to his mercy he saved us**, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost [breath]” (Tit 3:5), it wasn’t about moral righteous living because he had just stated earlier that we must live righteously, “For the grace [favor] of God that bringeth **salvation** hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, **we should live soberly, righteously [dikaiōs 1346]**, and godly, in this present world” (Tit 2:11-12). The “works [actions] of righteousness which we have done” are the actions of righteousness commanded under the law— abstaining from unclean meats, keeping the Sabbath, observing the feasts, and offering animal sacrifices. That these are the actions in question is supported by the context of the letter, “Not giving heed to **Jewish fables, and commandments of men**, that turn from the truth. **Unto the pure all things are pure**: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving [distrusting] **is nothing pure**; but even **their mind and conscience is defiled**” (Tit 1:14-15). Jewish men were commanding Gentiles to eat a diet pure from meats restricted by the law. But “Unto the pure all things *are* pure” is that all meats are pure to those that have a pure heart. However, to those with defiled minds and consciences, eating a diet pure from unclean meats accomplishes nothing. With God, what counts are pure hearts, “Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Mat 5:8).

Paul was reminding Titus—a Gentile himself ministering to Gentiles in Crete—about the outpouring from Jesus Christ upon the Gentiles at Cornelius’ house, “renewing of the Holy Ghost [breath]; Which he **shed [ekcheō 1632] on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour**” (Tit 3:5-6), “poured out on us” (NET). Christ had shown Peter a vision of impure and unclean animals, then declared them pure and clean, “Wherein were **all manner of fourfooted beasts** of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, **Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.**” (Act 10:12-13), “**What God hath cleansed, that** call not thou common” (Act 10:15). Peter then preached to the Gentiles as he had to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost, and consequently witnessed the same gift of tongues poured out, “And they of the circumcision which believed [trusted] were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that **on the Gentiles also was poured out [ekcheō 1632] the gift of the Holy Ghost [breath]**. For they heard them **speak with tongues**, and magnify God.” (Act 10:45-46).

Paul’s point to Titus was that God poured out the same gift upon the Gentiles as He did on the Jews yet “Not by works [actions] of righteousness which we have done.” The Gentiles at Cornelius’ house hadn’t been keeping the actions of eating a pure diet but were given the same gift as the Jews regardless. Therefore, “Not by works [actions] of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,” isn’t dismissing morally righteous living, but the “actions” of righteousness required for the Jews under the law. Paul wasn’t at all nullifying morally righteous living.

## Paul’s conclusion

“**Therefore we conclude** that a man is justified by faith [faithfulness] without the deeds [actions] of the law” (v. 28). Paul now draws his conclusion from this passage that we’re justified by Jesus Christ’s faithfulness in sacrificing Himself, and without the priests’ actions of sacrificing animals. However, “justified **by faith [faithfulness]** without the **deeds [actions] of the law**” (v. 28), has been changed to something else entirely—that we’re justified by our believing and not by righteous living. In fact, it’s being taught that living morally

righteous is even an affront to Christ in an attempt to save ourselves apart from His Sacrifice for our sins on the cross. Thus, we're taught that not only is morally righteous living unnecessary for salvation, but that it's even detrimental to it! Protestant "Christians" everywhere are falsely assured of salvation because they simply believe some facts are true. As a dire consequence, the standard of moral righteousness by which they're taught to live is lower than what Jesus Christ Himself commanded in His Sermon on the Mount. And because of this, according to Christ, they won't be entering into the Kingdom, "For I say unto you, That **except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness** of the scribes and Pharisees, **ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven**" (Mat 5:20).

Believing is essentially that God isn't lying! Vast multitudes of Protestants assume they're saved because they simply consider what God said is true. But that the Greek *pistis* in the New Testament isn't "faith" but "faithfulness" is supported by the fact that nowhere in the Old Testament was anyone ever required to believe anything. If salvation is truly by faith, and nobody before Christ was ever required to have faith, then everyone before Christ perished! Enoch, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, all perished.

## Saved by faith or by faithfulness?

This popular statement Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "For by grace [*favor*] are ye saved through faith [*faithfulness*]; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works [*actions*], lest any man should boast" (Eph 2:8-9), has been corrupted into a different message entirely. We're taught it means salvation by our faith and not by our meritorious works of living morally righteously. However, the overall context of the letter is God's plan of salvation from the beginning to have a chosen people saved by His favor in Christ that all other people would be made partakers.

God purposed from the beginning to choose a people to Himself, "According as he has **chosen us in him** before the foundation [*casting down*] of the world" (Eph 1:4). These people were redeemed through the blood of His Son according to the favor He bestowed upon them above all other people, "In whom we have **redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of **his grace [*favor*]**" (Eph 1:7). They were given first opportunity to trust in the Messiah, then the Gentiles were also given opportunity, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who **first trusted in Christ**. In whom **ye also trusted**" (Eph 1:13).

Therefore, the phrase "For by grace [*favor*] are ye saved" is specifically the favor bestowed upon God's chosen people above all other people. And "through faith [*faithfulness*]" is Christ's faithfulness as Paul will state later, "This was according to **the eternal [*age enduring*] purpose** that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access to God because of **Christ's faithfulness**" (Eph 3:11-12 NET). God's purpose from the beginning was His Son's faithfulness to shed His blood for His favored people, "In whom we have **redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of **his grace [*favor*]**" (Eph 1:7). And God's purpose endured the ages until finally being consummated on the cross.

The statement "and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God" has been debated ad nauseam about exactly what "the gift of God" is, whether it's our faith or salvation itself. But neither is the correct answer. The gift is God's own Son as He said of Himself: "For God so loved the world, that **he gave his only begotten Son**" (Jhn 3:16); "If thou knewest **the gift of God**, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink" (Jhn 4:10); "Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but **my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven**" (Jhn 6:32).

When Paul said “Not of works [*actions*], lest any man should boast,” it’s the actions of the priests in sacrificing animals for the sins of God’s people, giving them place to boast of themselves above all other people. Gentiles were uncircumcised and therefore alienated from Israel, leaving them without any hope of salvation, “ye *being* in time past **Gentiles** in the flesh, who are called **Uncircumcision** ... being **aliens** from the commonwealth of **Israel** ... **having no hope**, and without God in the world” (Eph 2:12). But Christ’s death on the cross made both Jews and Gentiles into one corporate body of God’s people, “For he is our peace, who hath **made both one**, and hath **broken down the middle wall of partition** *between us*; Having **abolished** in his flesh the enmity, *even* **the law of commandments contained in ordinances**” (Eph 2:14-15). The “middle wall of partition” is the veil of the Temple that was torn when Christ died on the cross, “the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom” (Mat 27:51; Mar 15:38), “the veil of the temple was rent in the midst” (Luk 23:45). Therefore, the High Priest’s actions on the annual Day of Atonement in sprinkling the blood of bulls and goats on the mercy seat, were ended. And that the “law of commandments *contained in ordinances*” was abolished are the ordinances commanded by circumcision, mainly abstinence from unclean meats, keeping the Sabbath, observing the feasts, and sacrificing animals. Therefore, “Not of works [*actions*], lest any man should boast,” is that the Jews can no longer boast in their actions because all people are saved by the faithfulness of God’s Son.

In his letters to the churches, Paul distinguished and contrasted the faithfulness of Jesus Christ from the actions of the law: “a man is justified by **faith** [*faithfulness*] without **the deeds** [*actions*] of the law” (v. 28); “no one is justified by **the works** [*actions*] of the law but by **the faithfulness of Jesus Christ**. And we have come to believe [*trust*] in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by **the faithfulness of Christ** and not by **the works** [*actions*] of the law, because by **the works** [*actions*] of the law no one will be justified” (Gal 2:16 NET); “For by grace [*favor*] are ye saved through faith [*faithfulness*]; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works [*actions*], lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9); “not because I have **my own righteousness derived from the law**, but because I have the righteousness that comes by way of **Christ’s faithfulness** - a righteousness from God that is in fact based on **Christ’s faithfulness**” (Phl 3:9 NET). Unfortunately, his statements are being turned to a different message entirely just as Peter said, “As also in **all his epistles**, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which **they that are unlearned and unstable wrest**, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2Pe 3:16).

A simple paraphrase of “For by grace [*favor*] are ye saved through faith [*faithfulness*]; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works [*actions*], lest any man should boast” is that “For it’s by His favor toward you as His people that you’re saved through the faithfulness of His Son, and not of yourselves: it’s the gift of God, and not your actions so that none of you can boast over other people.” Satan’s ministers, however, fight the understanding of the true context of Ephesians so they can continue deceiving and damning people with their false message of faith from this popular “faith” verse. And the main way they keep the true context shrouded is by their false context of Calvinism, “According as he hath **chosen us** in him before the foundation of the world ... Having **predestinated us**” (Eph 1:4,5). The doctrine of Calvinism isn’t an honest misinterpretation of statements about election, foreknowledge, and predestination, but a doctrine of devils concocted to confuse, deceive, and simply waste our precious time disputing over nothing and continuing down the broad way leading to destruction.

## The God of both the Jews and the Gentiles

*“Is he the God of **the Jews only**? is he not **also of the Gentiles [ethnos 1484]**? Yes, of **the Gentiles [ethnos 1484] also**”* (v. 29). In proving that all people have sinned, Paul spoke about both the Jews and the Greeks, “we have before proved **both Jews and Gentiles [hellēn 1672]**, that they are all under sin” (v. 9), “For all have sinned” (v. 23). And in declaring that God is the God of all people, he now speaks of the Jews and all ethnic people in general. No longer is He the God of the Jews only, but He is now also the God of all ethnic people. Paul will later quote from Hosea a prophecy that God would call all ethnicities His people and not only the Jews, “Even us, whom he hath called, **not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles [ethnos 1484]**? As he saith also in Osee, **I will call them my people, which were not my people**; and her beloved, which was not beloved.” (9:24-25).

Salvation is ultimately about the one true God being the God of our lives: “I will be their God” (Gen 17:8; Jer 24:7,31:33,32:38; Eze 11:20,36:28,37:23,27; Zec 8:8); “I will be their God” (2Co 6:16); “I will be to them a God” (Heb 8:10); “God is not ashamed to be called their God” (Heb 11:16); “they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, *and be* their God” (Rev 21:3); “I will be his God, and he shall be my son” (Rev 21:7). If we’re obeying the commandments of His Son Jesus Christ and living by the truth He taught, then we can trust God to provide, protect, defend, and ultimately save us. God will be our God. Many want Him as their Savior, but not as their God. But He is only our Savior when He is our God.

Of course the first of the Ten Commandments to God’s people was, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exo 20:3; Deu 5:7). Repeatedly God warned them to not put other gods before Him: “And in all *things* that I have said unto you be circumspect: and **make no mention of the name of other gods**, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth” (Exo 23:13); “And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and **walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them**, I testify against you this day that **ye shall surely perish**” (Deu 8:19); “Take heed to yourselves, that **your heart be not deceived**, and ye turn aside, and **serve other gods, and worship them**” (Deu 11:16); “And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, *to* the right hand, or *to* the left, **to go after other gods to serve them**” (Deu 28:14); “But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and **worship other gods, and serve them**; I denounce unto you this day, that **ye shall surely perish**” (Deu 30:17-18).

Several times in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, Jesus directed His disciples to God their Father in heaven: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify **your Father** which is in heaven” (5:16); “That thine alms may be in secret: and **thy Father** which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly” (6:4); “**pray to thy Father** which is in secret; and **thy Father** which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly” (6:6); “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, **your heavenly Father** will also forgive you” (6:14); “That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto **thy Father** which is in secret: and **thy Father**, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” (6:18); “how much more shall **your Father** which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (7:11); “doeth the will of **my Father** which is in heaven” (7:21).

Christ told a Samaritan woman that although only the Jews had the knowledge of the true God, soon the true worshippers would worship God as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, “Ye worship ye know not what: **we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews**. But the hour cometh, and now is, when **the true worshippers shall worship the Father** in spirit [*breath*] and in truth: for **the Father seeketh such to worship him**.” (Jhn 4:22-23). And after His resurrection, He said that His Father is our Father, and His God is our God,

“Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto **my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God**” (Jhn 20:17).

## The same God

“Seeing *it is one God*, which shall justify the circumcision by faith [*faithfulness*], and uncircumcision through faith [*faithfulness*]” (v. 30). Paul makes it clear that the Gentiles now serve the same God as the Jews. Understandably, it’s very difficult for the Jewish people to unlearn what has been instilled into them going all the way back to the Exodus. They have always viewed themselves as the people of God, the *only* people of God. The one true God revealed Himself to them through Moses and gave them commandments and ordinances under the mark of circumcision, and they supposed this to be the consummation of salvation. It’s hard for them to accept that this was only one piece, albeit a very large piece, in God’s plan of salvation from the beginning. That His overarching plan was for His Son to come into this world and die for the sins of the world so that all people would be saved, can be difficult for them to accept.

Sadly, the tables have been turned so that whereas it was the Jews that boasted of themselves over the Gentiles, “Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and **makest thy boast of God**” (2:17), Gentiles now boast of themselves over the Jews. Some “Christian” groups even teach that Gentiles replaced the Jews as God’s people! But Paul warned us to “**Boast not against the branches**. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but **the root thee**” (11:18). The “root” is Jesus Christ bearing the entire tree, and the “branches” are the Jewish people among whom Gentiles are grafted. Our mindset toward the Jewish people shouldn’t be of boasting, but of mercy, “Even so have these also now not believed [*trusted*], that **through your mercy they also may obtain mercy**” (11:31). Our love, mercy, and peace toward them is what will help lead them to the truth and be saved.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “Endeavouring to keep the **unity** of the Spirit [*breath*] in the bond of peace. ***There is one body***, and **one Spirit [*breath*]**, even as ye are called in **one hope** of your calling; **One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all**, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all.” (Eph 4:3-6). All of these “one” statements aren’t about singularity but unity. In other words, he wasn’t teaching that there’s only one body as opposed to two or more, but that both Jews and Gentiles belong to the same body. This is substantiated a few verses later by the one body, “From whom **the whole body** fitly joined together and compacted by that which **every joint** supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of **every part**, maketh increase of **the body** unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph 4:16). The words “*There is*” are italicized indicated they’re not in the Greek text but were added by the translators. But “*There is*” leaves the wrong impression that Paul was in fact teaching singularity with all of these “one” statements.

Paul was teaching that both Jews and Gentiles are members of the same body working together in unity, have the same indwelling breath from God, share the same hope of God’s calling, serve the same Lord Jesus Christ, partake in the same faithfulness of Christ, have been baptized into the same name, and have the same God and Father. This is what “the gospel of peace” means, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach **the gospel of peace**” (10:15), “Endeavouring to keep the **unity** of the Spirit [*breath*] in **the bond of peace**” (Eph 4:3), “And your feet shod with the preparation of **the gospel of peace**” (Eph 6:15). It’s both Jews and Gentiles being at peace with each other by virtue of being saved by the preaching of the same gospel message. The same God that justifies the circumcised by His Son’s faithfulness, also justifies the uncircumcised through His

Son's faithfulness, "Seeing *it is one God*, which shall justify the circumcision by faith [*faithfulness*], and uncircumcision through faith [*faithfulness*]" (v. 30).

## The law is established by Christ's faithfulness

"Do we then make void the law **through faith** [*faithfulness*]? God forbid: yea, **we establish the law.**" (v. 31). Christ's own words to His disciples, "Think not that I am come **to destroy the law**, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but **to fulfil**" (Mat 5:17). And after He was resurrected, "**These *are* the words which I spake unto you**, while I was yet with you, that **all things must be fulfilled**, which were written in the law of Moses, and *in* the prophets, and *in* the psalms, concerning me" (Luk 24:44). He didn't destroy the law but was the fulfillment of its very purpose as Paul will state later, "Christ *is* the end of the law" (10:4). He is the law's very end purpose or fulfillment. Without Him it would have served no purpose, but with Him it served its purpose.

Now, the question naturally arises that since God has a Son and His purpose from the very beginning was His Son, then why not make that clear to His people all along? Why allow them to keep thinking that the law was His end purpose only to later spring upon them the truth, even knowing it would cause much perplexity and outright opposition? It's because had God made known to us how He was going to save us, we wouldn't have cooperated, "And now, brethren, I wot that **through ignorance ye did it**, as *did* also your rulers" (Act 3:17), "But we speak the wisdom of God in **a mystery, *even* the hidden wisdom**, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for **had they known *it*, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory**" (1Co 2:7-8). God kept His plan of salvation hidden and secret from us, because we would have messed it up! Therefore, He allowed His own people to wrongly accept the law as His way of righteousness so they would unwittingly fulfill His true way of righteousness for all people to be saved.

Paul will state at the end of his letter, "according to **the revelation of the mystery**, which was kept secret since the world began, **But now is made manifest**" (16:25-26). Christ revealed to Paul's understanding the mystery that had been kept secret since the beginning, and Paul now divulged it here in this letter. Does Christ's faithfulness to His Father's plan from the beginning void or nullify the purpose of the law? Never! It establishes the very purpose of the law—to prove all are under sin so that all could be saved, "But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith [*faithfulness*] of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe [*trust*]" (Gal 3:22).