

THE SON OF MAN MUST BE LIFTED UP

I. John 12:27-46

A. Every now and then a new Christian song comes out. It has a catchy tune and you can't quit singing it. And then you find out the theology behind the song is really bad. e.g. "*Blow The Trumpet in Zion*" emerged in the late 80s as a victorious praise song for the church. But Joel 2, from which the lyrics are drawn, prophesies God's judgment on Jerusalem and His people. How coming calamity and doom could be reverse engineered into a victory song is beyond me!

B. Another chorus we used to gleefully sing was one called, "*Lift Jesus Higher.*" The lyrics went: "*Lift Jesus higher, lift Jesus higher, lift Him up for the world to see; He said 'If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me.'*" The songwriter surely pictured lifting up Jesus in exultation and praise, but when Jesus said those words about being *lifted up* for the world to see, He was referring to His crucifixion on the cross. Who wants to sing gleefully about crucifying Jesus?!

C. Our text today is where those lyrics came from. The setting is right after Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem and just before His death on the cross. We will hear God's affirming voice from heaven and Jesus' appeal to those who claim to be religious but do not believe. Our Lord appeals to the blind to see, for those dwelling in darkness to see the light of who He truly is. I want this for everyone who steps into this church, for everyone in our community, for everyone in our respective spheres, and for every nation, tribe, and tongue. I believe you do too...

D. John 12:27-46 (ESV) begins with Jesus speaking...

1) **V27: 27** "Now is My soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. (What is the hour that has Jesus troubled? He would become sin for us!)

2) **V28: 28** Father, glorify Your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." (God also spoke audibly at Jesus' Baptism and Transfiguration.)

3) **V29-30: 29** The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him." **30** Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. (It's a sad thing to hear thunder when God speaks!)

4) **V31-33: 31** Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. **32** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself." **33** He said this to show by what kind of death He was going to die. (The cross put a steak through the heart of sin, death, and the evil one. Remember, either your judgment took place on that cross or you'll face it on that great and terrible Day!)

5) **V34: 34** So the crowd answered Him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can You say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" (They'd cherry picked the OT Scriptures regarding the Messiah. Yes He was to reign forever. But before that, He was to die.)

6) **V35-36a: 35** So Jesus said to them, "The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. **36a** While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."

7) How many people do we know who are walking in darkness? These here were among God's chosen people. How many so-called Christians in our day are actually still walking in darkness? We can look at segments of the church and say, "*I see dead people!*" Others have their "*Eyes wide shut!*" We see so-called believers walking straight off cliffs, stumbling headlong into on-coming traffic! Remember that early church chorus found in Ephesians 5:14, "*Awake O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine upon you!*" Dead men don't make themselves alive and blind men don't will themselves to see! If you knew someone blind from birth and they suddenly were given the ability to see, do you think you'd be able to tell? What if someone buried in our cemetery suddenly came strolling into our sanctuary? So if God gives sight to the blind and life to the spiritually dead, doesn't it make sense for us to cry out to Him on behalf of those we love?

8) **V36b: 36b** When Jesus had said these things, He departed and hid Himself from them. (His time had not yet come but it would arrive shortly.)

9) **V37-40: 37** Though He had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in Him, **38** so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom

has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" **39** Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, **40** "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them." (Remember how God hardened the heart of Pharaoh?! Remember how He opened the heart of Lydia?)

10) V41: 41 Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke of Him. (Isaiah saw how the Messiah would become a suffering Servant and how His sacrifice would glorify God who sent Him to atone for our sin. The Bread & Cup remind us!)

11) V42-43: 42 Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in Him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; **43** for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. (Fear, shame, cowardice. Do you think this kind of believing saves? Remember demons believe and shudder. Esau sold his birthright for a plate of stew but these rejected God Almighty to embrace the approval of mere men. Even though the words and signs and evidence clearly revealed Jesus was who He said He was, they sided with those who would slaughter Him.)

12) V44-46: (Here's a word from the Lord. Listen carefully and don't mistake these words for thunder.) 44 And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. **45** And whoever sees Me sees Him who sent Me. **46** I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in Me may not remain in darkness.

II. Communion

A. Know this: God's love is never separated from His truth. God's love is never separated from His justice. God's love is never separated from His holiness. And God never turns a blind eye to sin. Sin incurs God's wrath because He is righteous, holy, and just. Any sort of love that turns a blind eye to sin is not the love of God. So God has taken our sin and imputed it to His Son, Jesus, who took it to the cross where God's wrath was unleashed upon Him. God has taken the holiness and right-standing of His Son, and bestowed that upon us. When we talk about God's love, that's what we're talking about! The Bread & Cup remind us.

B. Romans 5:6-11 (ESV) leaves no doubt: 6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— **8** but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, (Declared not guilty! Declared righteous!) much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. (Christ absorbed your wrath! A.W. Tozer said: "The cross is the lightning rod of grace that short-circuits God's wrath to Christ so that only the light of His love remains for believers.") **10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation. The Bread & Cup remind us.

C. Someone said it well: "The cross is where God's love and justice meet." We are not forgiven for sins that have gone unpunished--Christ bore our punishment! God's forgiveness has come because justice has been served. Had God overlooked man's sin since Adam, (swept it under the rug) ignored His Law, broken by every human, His own righteousness and holiness and justice would be suspect. If your grandchild was raped by a pedophile and was brought before a judge and that judge merely let the perp walk, we'd call him an unjust judge. But God, who is full of love, is not unjust. He is altogether righteous and holy and just, even as He is loving and merciful, gracious and kind. The Bread & Cup remind us.

D. Romans 3:23-26 (NIV) clarifies: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and all are justified freely (Declared not guilty! Declared righteous!) by His grace (His undeserved love) through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. **25** God presented Christ (His only Son!) as a sacrifice of atonement, (Propitiation) through the shedding of His blood--to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate His righteousness, (His holiness & justice) because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- (Paul repeats) **26** He did it to demonstrate His righteousness (His holiness & justice) at the present time, so as to be just and the One who justifies (Declares not guilty! Declares righteous!) those who have faith in Jesus. (God is the Just Justifier. This is why Jesus was lifted up on a cross for the world to see! May you be drawn to Him right now!)

* Pray & Serve Communion...

* **John 3:13-15 (AMP) Jesus' words to Nicodemus take us all home today: 13** No one has gone up into heaven, but there is One who came down from heaven, the Son of Man [Himself—whose home is in heaven]. **14** Just as Moses lifted up the [bronze] serpent in the desert [on a pole], so must the Son of Man be lifted up [on the cross], **15** so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life [after physical death, and will actually live forever].

Scriptures, Videos, & Bonus Stuff

John 12:27-46 (ESV)

27 “Now is My soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. **28** Father, glorify Your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” **29** The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to Him.” **30** Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. **31** Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. **32** And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to Myself.” **33** He said this to show by what kind of death He was going to die. **34** So the crowd answered Him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can You say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” **35** So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. **36** While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.” When Jesus had said these things, He departed and hid Himself from them. **37** Though He had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in Him, **38** so that the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: “*Lord, who has believed what he heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*” **39** Therefore they could not believe. For again Isaiah said, **40** “*He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, lest they see with their eyes, and understand with their heart, and turn, and I would heal them.*” **41** Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke of Him. **42** Nevertheless, many even of the authorities believed in Him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, so that they would not be put out of the synagogue; **43** for they loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God. **44** And Jesus cried out and said, “Whoever believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. **45** And whoever sees Me sees Him who sent Me. **46** I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in Me may not remain in darkness.”

Romans 5:6-11 (ESV)

6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— **8** but God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. **9** Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God. **10** For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. **11** More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Romans 3:23-26 (NIV)

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24** and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. **25** God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood--to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished-- **26** He did it to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Quote by A.W. Tozer

"The cross is the lightning rod of grace that short-circuits God's wrath to Christ so that only the light of His love remains for believers."

John 3:13-15 (AMP)

13 No one has gone up into heaven, but there is One who came down from heaven, the Son of Man [Himself—whose home is in heaven]. **14** Just as Moses lifted up the [bronze] serpent in the desert [on a pole], so must the Son of Man be lifted up [on the cross], **15** so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life [after physical death, and will actually live forever].

Film Clips & Other Links

Word Study: YWWH - "LORD" - The Bible Project (Yahweh and Adonai Explained)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLrGM26pmM0>

Bonus Stuff

John 8:28-29 (AMP)

28 So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man [on the cross], you will know then [without any doubt] that I am He, and that I do nothing on My own authority, but I say these things just as My Father taught Me. **29** And He who sent Me is [always] with Me; He has not left Me alone, because I always do what pleases Him.”

Hebrews 2:14-18 (ESV)

14 Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death He might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, **15** and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. **16** For surely it is not angels that He helps, but He helps the offspring of Abraham. **17** Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. **18** For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.

Quote by Jerry Bridges

"Jesus did not die just to give us peace and a purpose in life; He died to save us from the wrath of God. He died to reconcile us to a holy God who was alienated from us because of our sin. He died to ransom us from the penalty of sin – the punishment of everlasting destruction, shut out from the presence of the Lord. He died that we, the just objects of God's wrath, should become, by His grace, heirs of God and co-heirs with Him.

- Jerry Bridges, *The Practice of Godliness*, NavPress, 1996, p. 24.

Quote by John Murray

"The doctrine of propitiation is precisely this: that God loved the objects of His wrath (the world) so much that He gave His own Son to the end that He by His blood should make provision for the removal of His wrath. It was Christ's so to deal with the wrath that the loved would no longer be the objects of wrath, and love would achieve its aim of making the children of wrath the children of God's good pleasure."

- John Murray, *The Atonement*, Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing, 1976. To read the full piece, go to: https://www.the-highway.com/atonement_murray.html

Quote by John Stott

"It would be hard to exaggerate the differences between the pagan and the Christian views of propitiation. In the pagan perspective, human beings try to placate their bad-tempered deities with their own paltry offerings. According to the Christian revelation, God's own great love propitiated His own holy wrath through the gift of His own dear Son, who took our place, bore our sin and died our death. Thus God Himself gave Himself to save us from Himself."

- John Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World*, InterVarsity Press, 1995, p. 115.

Quote by John Piper

"So to save sinners, and at the same time magnify the worth of His glory, God lays our sin on Jesus and abandons Him to shame and slaughter on the cross. The clearest and most important biblical statement of this truth is found in Romans 3:23-26. If I were asked, "What is the most important paragraph in the Bible?" I think this is the paragraph I would name. It goes to the very root of the Christian gospel and lays bare the heart of God like few other texts. If there is a moment in the symphony of biblical revelation when the contrasting themes of justice and mercy come together into a magnificent orchestral statement of unity and harmony and peace, it is here in Romans 3:23-26."

- John Piper, *The Pleasures of God: Meditations on God's Delight in Being God*, Multnomah Books, 1991, 2000, p.162.

Quote by Rev. Eric Alexander

"The real horror of being outside of Christ is that there is no shelter from the wrath of God."

- Rev. Alexander has had a wide ministry both in Europe and the U.S, teaching at a number of seminaries including Regent College, The Masters Seminary, Beeson Divinity School, and Westminster Theological Seminary.

Bad News, Good News: God's Wrath and Mercy

By Ship Heitzig

I once read a story set in the Wild West of a young man who saved a boy trapped on a runaway stagecoach. The man eventually became a judge and the boy, a criminal. Years later, the criminal appeared in the judge's court, accused of a grievous crime. He recognized the judge and appealed to him, based on their earlier experience, to save him from the death penalty. The judge replied, "Son, on that day I was your savior. Today, I am your judge," and sentenced him to the gallows. The judge did his job that day, called to administer right judgment based on the facts at hand.

There's an important balance between God's love and His holiness. Love without boundaries is dangerous. True love requires love for the truth—in fact, as the Apostle Paul said, "Love rejoices in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). And that truth forms the boundaries for love's expression. So in Scripture, we see that Jesus loves all kinds of people, including the ones many of us would have a hard time loving: doubters, haters, atheists, homosexuals, traitors and even terrorists. But Jesus doesn't love what they do. That's the balance. God loves you, but He doesn't love everything you do. If we

don't take both sides into account, love becomes license—a permission slip we use to excuse doing what we want instead of what God wants.

Paul put the issue this way: “Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4). With that in mind, we can see, for example, that Jesus loves prostitutes, but He doesn't love prostitution. He expects the prostitute to leave that lifestyle upon turning to Him. He loves the broken, but He wants to heal them. Jesus came to bring change. It's His love that affects us and leads us to repentance, and it's our rejection of His love that leads us to inescapable judgment. The mistake so many make is to separate God's love from His judgment. As Oswald Chambers once said, “In the teachings of Jesus Christ the element of judgment is always brought out—it is the sign of the love of God.”

Paul established this balance in Romans 1, saying he was not ashamed of the Gospel because it is “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (verse 16). But then, in verse 18, he wrote, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness.” This theological tension reminds us we'll never appreciate the Good News until we understand the bad news. It's the bad news that compels the Good News to be supplied. Wrath summons mercy and grace.

The United States was founded on Biblical truth, with its legal and moral foundation shaped by God's view of right and wrong. Despite that strong start, we have many today who “suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (verse 18), and it's not hard to make a case that God is judging the nation because of all who have rejected Him. Many have “exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator” (verse 25). To fail to honor God despite the manifest evidence of His creation and the internal testimony of His character and image in us is to invite His wrath.

God's wrath is the result of our sin. He isn't just randomly angry, or wrathful by nature; going back to Eden, we have offended Him by our sinful behavior, based on our choices to do things our way instead of His. But He wants us to come back to Him—His goodness should lead us to repentance, but true repentance starts only when we fully realize that we are sinners, that we deserve God's judgment.

The entire world is guilty before God, including any who consider themselves to be just and moral people. No one keeps every part of God's law perfectly. Paul wrote, “We know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Romans 3:19). God never changes; He is always perfect, holy, just and righteous. We've all fallen short of God's standards, we all deserve His judgment, and we'll never find a solution for our predicament apart from Him.

In short, everyone is essentially depraved (a good theological term that has gone missing these days). Sin is part of all our origin stories. We're all in hot water and headed for eternal flames. Hell isn't made up or relative to our situation; according to no less an expert than Jesus Himself, it's a real place of “darkness [where] there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 22:13), and we should “fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

But God is “not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). In fact, He is willing to suffer if that's what it takes to turn our hearts back to Him. That's where Jesus comes in. He bought back—with His own blood—the possibility that we can be in God's favor, and when we receive Him as our risen Lord and Savior, God passes over our sins “that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26). God paid the price we could never pay because not only is He eternally holy and just, He is also eternally loving and, until the end of this age of grace, continually merciful and forgiving. That's the Good News—and oh, is it good!

Once you've made that all-important decision to receive Christ—which is basically accepting a gift you could never earn but God offers freely—then you've got work to do. You don't work to earn that salvation—again, you never could—but out of gratitude, you offer every part of your life to God, letting His Spirit work in you to make you more and more like Jesus in nature and character. That means surrendering all of your old habits, thoughts and deeds to Him—and doing so ruthlessly, no holds barred.

Paul put it like this: “Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming” (Colossians 3:5-6 NIV). It's like taking out the trash. You clear out the old, used-up stuff that can only harm you if it lays around, so you can start fresh. In Christ, you are a new creation, but what does that look like in terms of your behavior? Paul offers a few laundry lists, one of what you're getting rid of-- “anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language” (Colossians 3:8)--and another of

what you should be doing to imitate Christ: "Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience" (Colossians 3:12).

I've heard people say, "How can God help me change" I am what I am—it's not just habits, it's genetics." You may be genetically predisposed to addictive behavior or socially conditioned because a parent gambled or was addicted to porn or prone to abusive behavior. But you still have a choice. If God's grace and the blood of Christ are enough to save you from hell, they are certainly enough to help you overcome any obstacle you're facing. Jesus said, "Without Me, you can do nothing" (John 15:5). No amount of counseling, book reading or medication can bring the lasting heart change you need like God can. That kind of deep change starts with a choice. When you choose Jesus, He gives you the power to change: "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7).

The Bible makes it clear that God's wrath is coming. He has given us one way out: Jesus Christ. What He has not given us is a list of excuses for why we can't use His exit strategy. Once we're a new creation in Christ, He will give us what we need to overcome old habits that incur wrath and start new ones that honor Him. The bad news is that God's wrath is real, and it is coming. The good news is that in Christ we "shall not come into judgment" (John 5:24), we can "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4), and we look forward to a post-wrath future because, "if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:5).

We need to acknowledge that God is "slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked" (Nahum 1:3). Above all, we should remember a verse that Martin Luther called "an overwhelming consolation": "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him" (Nahum 1:7).

If you have embraced the Good News of Jesus Christ, the bad news of coming judgment holds no terror for you. Rejoice in your salvation, and do what you can to let others know that God's escape plan is Good News for them, too.

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Theological Note os Romans 3:23-26

The NIV Study Bible

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— 26 He did it to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. - Romans 3:23-26 (NIV)

3:23 *glory of God.* What God intended humans to be. The glory they had before the fall (see Ge 1:26-28; Ps 8:5-6 and notes; cf. Eph 4:24. Col 3:10) the believer will again have through Christ (see Heb 2:5-9 and notes).

3:24 *justified.* Paul uses the Greek verb for "justified" 22 times, mostly in 2:13-5:1; and Gal 2-3. It is translated "*justify*" in all cases except two (2:13; 3:20, where it is translated "*declared righteous*"). The term describes what happens when someone believes in Christ as their Savior: From the negative viewpoint, He declares them to be not guilty; from the positive viewpoint, He declares him to be righteous. He cancels the guilt of the person's sin and credits righteousness to him. Paul emphasizes two points in this regard: **(1)** No one lives a perfectly good, holy, righteous life. On the contrary, "*there is no one righteous*" (v. 10), and "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (v. 23). "*Therefore no one will be declared righteous in His [God's] sight by observing the law*" (v. 20) **(2)** But even though all are sinners and not sons, God will declare everyone who puts his trust in Jesus not guilty but righteous. This legal declaration is valid because Christ died to pay the penalty for our sin and lived a life of perfect righteousness that can in turn be imputed to us. This is the central theme of Romans and is stated in the theme verse. 1:17 ("*a righteousness from God*"). Christ's righteousness (His obedience to God's law and His sacrificial death) will be credited to believers as their own. Paul uses the word "*credited*" nine times in ch 4 alone. *freely by His grace.* The central thought in justification is that, although man clearly and totally deserves to be declared guilty (vv. 9-19), because of His trust in Christ God declares them righteous. This is stated in several ways here: **(1)** "*freely*" (as a gift, for nothing), **(2)** "*by His grace*", **(3)** "*through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus*" and **(4)** "*through faith*" (v 25). *redemption.* A word taken from the slave market—the basic idea is that of obtaining release by payment of a ransom. Paul uses this word to refer to release from guilt, with its liability for judgment, and to deliverance from slavery to sin, because Christ in His death paid the ransom for us.

3:25 *sacrifice of atonement*. The Greek for this phrase speaks of a sacrifice that satisfies the righteous wrath of God. Without this appeasement ("propitiation") all people are justly destined for eternal punishment. See NIV text note here: [25 *Or as the One who would turn aside His wrath, taking away sin.*]; see also note on 1Jn 2:2. *faith in His blood*. Saving faith looks to Jesus Christ in His sacrificial death for us.

3:25b-26 The sins of God's people, punished symbolically in the animal sacrifices of the OT period, would be totally punished in the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

- Theological Note on Romans 3:23-26, *The NIV Study Bible*, Zondervan, © 1985, p. 2169.

Theological Note on Romans 3:23-26

The ESV Study Bible

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

- Romans 3:23-26 (ESV)

3:23 No one can state a claim to this righteousness based on his or her own obedience, for all people have sinned and fall short of what God demands (see 1:21).

3:24 Therefore, all are *justified* (declared not guilty but righteous by the divine Judge) only by God's *grace* (unmerited favor). The word *redemption* reaches back to the OT exodus and the blood of the Passover lamb (see Exodus 12-15), by which the Lord liberated Israel from Egypt; the exodus likewise points forward to the greater redemption Jesus won for His people through His blood by forgiving them their sins through His death on the cross (cf. Eph. 1:7; Col 1:14). On justification, see note on Gal. 2:16.

3:25 Jesus' blood "propitiated" or satisfied God's wrath (1:18), so that His holiness was not compromised in forgiving sinners. Some scholars have argued that the word *propitiation* should be translated *expiation* (the wiping away of sin), but the word cannot be restricted to the wiping away of sins as it also refers to the satisfaction or appeasement of God's wrath, turning it to favor (cf. on John 18:11). God's righteous anger needed to be appeased before sin could be forgiven, and God in His love sent His Son (who offered Himself willingly) to satisfy God's holy anger against sin. In this way God demonstrated His *righteousness*, which here refers particularly to His holiness and justice. God's justice was called into question because in His patience He had overlooked *former* sins. In other words, how could God as the utterly Holy One tolerate human sin without inflicting full punishment on human beings immediately? Paul's answer is that God looked forward to the cross of Christ where the full payment for the guilt of sin would be made, where Christ would die in the place of sinners. In the OT, propitiation (or complete satisfaction of the wrath of God) is symbolically foreshadowed in several incidents: e.g. Ex. 32:11-14; Num. 25:8; 11; Josh. 7:25-26.

3:26 Paul repeats again, because of its supreme importance, that God has demonstrated His *righteousness*, i.e., His holiness and justice, **at the present time** in salvation history. In the cross of Christ, God has shown Himself to be just (utterly holy, so that the penalty demanded by the law is not removed but paid for by Christ) but also **the Justifier** (the One who provides the means of justification and who declares people in right standing with Himself) and the Savior of all those who put their trust in Jesus. Here is the heart of the Christian faith, for at the cross God's justice and love meet.

- Theological Note on Romans 3:23-26, *The ESV Study Bible*, Crossway, © 2008, p. 2163.
