

This correct view of repentance and faith is necessary if we are to properly view God and His gospel. What we have gleaned will enhance our understanding of Romans 3:22:

*even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;* (Romans 3:22)

Subsequent to our repenting and believing while depraved, God made us as righteous as He is righteous through placing us “*in Christ*” (1Corinthians 12:13; 2Corinthians 5:17, 21):

*For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body [Christ’s body],...* (1Corinthians 12:13)

*Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.* (2Corinthians 5:17)

*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* (2Corinthians 5:21)

This gift of “*righteousness*” is why we are saints instead of lowly sinners saved by grace—a topic addressed in much depth when we arrive at Romans 5:1. (Remember for future reference that the word “*all*” in Romans 3:22 points to believers only.)

Romans 3:23 is deeper than initially meets the eye. It declares:

*“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*  
(Romans 3:23)

We should have no problem understanding that “*all have sinned.*” Paul has made this remarkably clear. Yet, we need to pay special attention to the word “*all*” (Romans 3:23). In this case, “*all*” points to every person, not just some. However, in Romans 3:22 “*all*” points to believers alone. If “*all*” is misinterpreted in Romans 3:23, then an

argument could be made that only believers “*fall short of*” God’s “*glory*”—which we know to be incorrect.

Some theologians who have failed to interpret words such as “*all, they, us, we, our, my, and world*” in their proper context view the word “*world*” in John 3:16 (for instance) as pointing to the “*world*” of believers only. As a result, they teach that God loves the elect and hates the non-elect—a false assumption indeed:

*“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

The above-mentioned false assumption is easily refuted, for the word “*world*” is from the Greek word *kosmos*, meaning the inhabited earth. Also, the word “*whoever*” validates that all (all persons) are free to partake of the life offered through the Son—although, a majority of people refuse to do so.

The word “*world*” is limited in scope in some cases, however, such as in Luke 2:1:

*And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (Luke 2:1 KJV)*

“*World*” in this instance points to the Roman world (not the entire inhabited earth), just as Romans 11:12 makes reference to the Gentile world:

*Now if their transgression be riches for the world and their failure be riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfillment be! (Romans 11:12)*

The fact that “*world*” can be interpreted in this manner in no way means that it, in every case, is used in a limited sense. Nor does it always point to the entire inhabited earth, as has already been confirmed. How then does one determine the proper meaning? As always, it is context based on the full counsel. Let’s observe some additional passages that verify the value of context.

*For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. (Romans 5:10)*

Was Paul teaching that only he and the church at Rome were “reconciled to God through the death of His [the Father’s] Son”? Of course not! Such a conclusion could be drawn should context be disregarded.

*to all who are beloved of God in Rome... (Romans 1:7)*

God loved the believers at Rome. However, this passage cannot be used in an attempt to confirm that God loves the elect only. If that were the case, it could also be argued that He loved the believers at Rome only.

*But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

Does Romans 5:8 teach that God loves only Paul and the believers at Rome (note the word “*us*”)? Of course not! Therefore, it cannot be used by the adherents of limited atonement to attempt to prove that God’s love is particular.

*Just as it is written, “JACOB I LOVED, BUT ESAU I HATED.” (Romans 9:13)*

The word “*hated*” in this instance means “to love less.” Paul was also, based on Genesis 25:23, speaking of nations rather than individuals:

*And the LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb; And two peoples shall be separated from your body; And one people shall be stronger than the other; And the older shall serve the younger.” (Genesis 25:23)*

Based on these findings, the apostle (in Romans 9:13) is communicating that God loved Jacob (the nation of Israel) more than He loved Esau (the nation of Edom). God married Israel. He did not marry the Edomites. This verse, therefore, cannot be used in an attempt to verify limited atonement—an unsuitable system of thought that rests on the assumption that God’s love is particular. Consider 1Thessalonians 1:4 for instance:

*knowing, brethren beloved by God...* (1Thessalonians 1:4)

If God’s love is limited, as Reformed Theology (extreme and hyper-Calvinism) suggests, is it limited in the sense that He loves only the believers at Thessalonica? (Observe Diagrams 11, 13-15 in the Reference Section for additional information regarding Reformed Theology.) This supposition is not what Reformed theologians conclude, for they advocate that God’s love is limited in the sense that He loves the elect alone. However, by disregarding context and full counsel (which is what Calvinism does while attempting to prove that God loves only the elect), one could conclude that God loves only the believers at Thessalonica. Proper context and full counsel resolve the issue by confirming that God loves all—all being everyone, in fact, all “*the world*” of John 3:16.

Let’s take this input and again consider Romans 3:23:

*“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*  
(Romans 3:23)

“*All* [all descendants of Adam]...*fall short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23) prior to salvation due to being born with a sin nature that enjoys sin. Even so, the depraved (the spiritually unregenerated) are free to repent and exercise faith in Christ.

To comprehend the depth of the second phrase, “*and fall short of the glory of God,*” we must review what was discussed in Romans 1:23 regarding God’s “*glory.*”

The phrase, “*the glory of God,*” points to the physical manifestation of God’s presence—which appeared in the Old Testament in the form of a cloud and (or) fire. This glory appeared to Moses in Exodus 3:2 and to

Israel in Exodus 13:21-22 and Exodus 19:16-18. It reappeared and remained on the earth after the completion of the tabernacle in Exodus 40:34-38, even filling King Solomon's temple in 2Chronicles 5:13-14. This same glory departed from Jerusalem and ascended into heaven in Ezekiel 11:22-25, remaining there until Luke 2:8-9. Because Jesus is the "glory" of God (John 1:14), the glory returned to earth in the Person of Christ. After Jesus' resurrection, the glory ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9), only to reappear on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:3) to live in every New Testament believer. God placed His "glory" inside us (Colossians 1:27) subsequent to our exercising repentance and faith while depraved (Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9-10). What wonderful news, for we are not second-class citizens of the kingdom! We are glorified saints who sometimes sin!

Note the word "*justified*" in Romans 3:24.

*being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; (Romans 3:24)*

"*Justified*" means "to be made righteous (right) in the eyes of God." It also means, "just as if I never sinned or ever will sin again." Consider too that we were "*justified as a gift by His grace,*" "grace" being defined as "unmerited favor." God's justification of the New Testament believer is, therefore, a "*gift;*" it is not earned. "*Faith,*" exercised while depraved, and prior to spiritual regeneration (salvation), is not a "*work*" (Romans 3:27; 4:5; 9:32).

Even more good news is forthcoming. "*Redemption*" (v.24) means "to be set free, to liberate by paying a price." Therefore, our sins were redeemed (paid for) on the cross by God's grace. In addition, our sinful nature was eradicated through Christ's death, which will be addressed in Romans 6. Thus, we were "*justified*" (made righteous) by God's "*grace*" (God's unmerited favor) "*through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,*" a "*redemption*" that was applied once we exercised repentance and faith while depraved and were placed in Christ (1Corinthians 12:13; 2Corinthians 5:17). Jesus paid for our sins in 30 AD, but the payment was not credited to our account until we repented and believed while depraved and were placed in God's holy Son. The payment was not credited to our account while Jesus was on the cross, as some theologians have incorrectly assumed.

As we examine the cross in greater depth, we will become increasingly aware of the Father's unfathomable love for us. He placed our sins, along with the sins of all mankind, upon His selfless Son! He also established a friendship with us subsequent to our exercising repentance and faith while depraved.

God's mercy demonstrated toward the repentant sinner is what "propitiation" is all about (Romans 3:25), for the same Greek word rendered "propitiation" in Romans 3:25 is rendered "mercy seat" in Hebrews 9:5.

*whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; (Romans 3:25)*

*And above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; but of these things we cannot now speak in detail. (Hebrews 9:5)*

The mercy seat, positioned on top of the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle, and later in the temple, was where sins were atoned, or covered. The high priest would enter the holy of holies "...once a year... taking blood...for himself and for the sins of the people..." (Hebrews 9:7). This blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat, after which the sins of Israel were covered. Jesus' death removed the need for this blood to be offered, a topic addressed in more depth in Hebrews 9:1-28. Thus, the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* defines "propitiation" as, "the removal of wrath by the offering of a gift."

How did the cross of Christ "demonstrate" God's "righteousness" (Romans 3:25)? In other words, was God right in judging sin? Of course He was, for He had to judge sin to remain just! He has never sinned, never will sin, and cannot condone sin. Since man is born lost and incapable of saving himself, the only remedy was crucifying a sinless God-man on the cross. Because Jesus was without sin (and remains without sin), He was the only being capable of dying for man's misdeeds. He was the perfect offering. Indeed, God's "righteousness," the fact that He was right in judging sin, was demonstrated on the cross.

Consequently, God's "righteousness" is revealed to an ever-increasing degree ("from faith to faith") as we mature in our understanding of His heart:

*For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "BUT THE RIGHTEOUS man SHALL LIVE BY FAITH." (Romans 1:17)*

Sins were only atoned, or covered, through the sacrifices offered under the Mosaic Law and were not forgiven until the cross. Consequently, no Old Testament believer's sins were forgiven until Jesus died. Thus, Paul states:

*"God...passed over the sins previously committed"*  
(Romans 3:25).

Also, Hebrews 10:4 and 10:11 verify that "the blood" of animals could never "take away sins." Only the blood of Christ could accomplish such a feat.

The cross demonstrated God's "righteousness" to an even greater degree than it was demonstrated in Old Testament times.

*for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:26)*

Old Testament believers understood that God is righteous, but not like church saints understand His "righteousness at the present time." We received God's righteousness the moment we repented and believed while depraved. Old Testament believers, who were saved on credit, were not made righteous until the cross. Indisputably, the cross was the most vivid demonstration of God's righteousness imaginable.

Because God is righteous, He is "just." Only the righteous can rule justly. Because He is "just," He possesses the ability to justify those who choose to repent and believe while depraved. In other words, unless God is just, He cannot justify those who desire to become part of His family.

Due to God's impeccable justness, He, one hundred percent of the time, attaches the proper punishment to all wrongdoing. He is omniscient and, therefore, knows every detail surrounding each misdeed. No need for additional witnesses, as in our courts of Law, for nothing transpires that escapes His omniscience. In fact, His foreknowledge allows Him to know every detail of all events before they occur—without being required to cause them! God truly is the all-knowing One—Who never violates His love while exercising His justice.

This knowledge of God allows us to recognize that He would never condemn anyone unjustly. Thus, all who receive His wrath must have opportunity to believe. Yet, a popular teaching of our day portrays God as judging those who never have opportunity to exercise personal repentance and faith. The adherents of this view depict God as electing certain individuals to salvation from eternity past, yet leaving the remainder to the consequence of their sin. The “remainder” never have opportunity to believe, however, yet receive God's wrath for failing to believe! Such a view makes God totally unjust—a fact that the proponents of this system vehemently deny. In fact, a popular supporter of this view proclaims that one must perceive God as judging those who have no opportunity to believe (for failing to believe) before he can understand the value of this assessment of the Scriptures. Wow!

Because God is “...*just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus*” (v.26), we can take no credit for our salvation. All “*boasting...is excluded*” when we realize that we are “*justified by faith*” rather than by the “*works of the Law*”:

*Where then is boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. (Romans 3:27-28)*

Don't misunderstand. Paul is not saying that the faith we exercised while depraved saved (justified) us, but rather that God saved (justified) us once we exercised faith while depraved. Therefore the faith we exercised while depraved is not a work—the point that Paul is stressing in verses 27-28.

Be sure to notice the phrase, “*law of faith*” (v.27). The word “*law*” in this case, when viewed in context, can be translated “principle” and

should not be confused with Law (rules and regulations). We are “free” from the Law of rules and regulations (Galatians 5:1) once we accept the “law” (principle) “of faith” (Romans 3:27). We will discuss this subject in more detail later.

According to Romans 3:29-30 and Ephesians 2, “God” is not only “the God of Jews,” “the circumcised,” but He is also “the God of Gentiles,” “the uncircumcised.” In fact, Ephesians 2:14 states that Jesus “made both groups into one.” Thus, during the church age, both Jews and Gentiles become “one body” through being placed in Christ subsequent to repenting and believing while depraved.

*Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one. (Romans 3:29-30)*

*For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. (Ephesians 2:14-16)*

Repentance and faith must be exercised by the depraved before God will award salvation. Therefore, Paul is not teaching that the repentance and faith exercised by the depraved saves (justifies) them. Rather, he is teaching that God saves (justifies) the depraved once they exercise repentance and faith. In this case, does our “faith” in any way “nullify the Law”? Paul says it does not:

*Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Law. (Romans 3:31)*

The initial purpose of “the Law,” to follow Paul’s line of thinking, was to expose sin (Romans 3:19-20) and to show man his need for a

*Advancing in Romans*

*Romans 3:9-31*

Savior (Galatians 3:24). Thus, we do not “*nullify the Law through faith*” but “*establish*” it (Romans 3:31). Isn't this fun!

