

Study in Romans

Doctrine > Good News > Salvation Explained > Intro to God's Plan in History
Romans 3:25-31

Jesus Has Now Been Lifted Up To Demonstrate God as Just and Justifier (vv. 25-26)

Just like Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness to relieve the suffering of those who would look to it by faith, so has Jesus Christ been lifted up before the eyes of all such that all people throughout history would look to Him in faith as their only hope of salvation (Num. 21:4-9 & John 3:14-15; 8:28; 12:32).

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

– John 3:14-15 ESV

1. One more word study: Atonement/propitiation
 - a. In Greek, this is a form of the word for reconciling two parties by satisfying the just demands of the offended party or parties. In the form it's used here, it is the object or means through which this atonement or propitiation happens. In the OT, it would refer to the mercy seat. Here it refers to Jesus Christ.
 - b. The point Paul is making is that Jesus has become the means by which God has demonstrated His justice before the eyes of all. Later on in 5:8, Paul will tell us that the cross also demonstrates God's love. Both justice and love are displayed in a perfect way on the cross! Only God could come up with such a plan.
 - c. Application: Pardon vs. atonement
 - i. You and I can forgive (i.e., pardon) meaning we chose to exercise mercy and not hold a guilty party responsible to right the wrong.
 - ii. Only God can atone meaning the guilty party is freed from obligation to the debt of the wrong done because the debt was paid and the offended party (God) is satisfied.
2. Jesus was "lifted up"
 - a. God did not ignore or even pardon the sins committed in times past
 - b. God did wait until Jesus' atoning work so that He might be both just and justifier of those who have faith in Jesus.

Introduction to God's Purpose for the Law Throughout History (vv. 27-31)

Paul now picks up what he said in vv. 19-20. In fact, those verses and these should be read without the intervening verses to get the full force of what Paul is saying. This message of justification through faith in Jesus eliminates any chance of boasting that anyone might think he or she has because it is God who is doing the justifying of both Jews and Gentiles. This does not contradict or nullify the law because the purpose of the law was never to provide justification, but rather to prove that God's assessment of mankind's condition of disqualification for eternal life is in fact true. This is why Paul can say that the Gospel actually upholds the law.

1. Where then is boasting? (vv. 27-28)
 - a. Boasting (also translated "glorying") can be an expression of worship (cf. Is. 43:25; Jer. 9:23-26)
 - i. Jews brag about their relationship to God (2:17, 23)
 - ii. Abraham had a faith to be proud of, but not before God (4:1-2)
 - b. Faith nullifies any boasting we can make of our good works
2. Don't Jews have a special relationship to God? (vv. 29-30)
 - a. No, God is God of both Jews and Gentiles
 - b. Both Jews and Gentiles are justified through the same faith
3. Does faith destroy the law? (v. 31)
 - a. No way! Instead it upholds it by giving us the solution to our problem that the law exposes