

Good example of this  
is the paper for  
theology course  
introduction to the  
new tes...

[Experience](#), [Belief](#)



## **Introduction to the New Testament**

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 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. 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: 21-26)

Paul was a great minister of the gospel and an apostle at his time of ministry. He sought to explain and expand on scriptures to ensure that they are understood by the average believer. Paul was living in a generation that interpreted the scriptures differently. There were questions on who qualified to be righteous and the kind of people that Jesus died for on the cross. Righteousness was also seen as an impossibility due to the sin that people found themselves in. The Pharisees, who were teachers of the law emphasised on particular ways that had to be followed. Not adhering to the set rules was seen as a grave mistake that invited tough punishment. The work of the cross and the level at which sin were forgiven was not well understood by the believers. In Romans 3: 21-26, Paul is encountered with a responsibility of explaining the aspect of righteousness and the role of faith in justifying believers.

Thesis: In this paper, I will argue for the fact that Paul was insisting on the importance of righteousness that can be acquired through faith, for a believer to be justified. We examine the issue of righteousness, and how faith, and the dispensation of grace help believers to find justification even when they have fallen short of the glory of God. We shall analyse how Paul looks t the issue of righteousness and faith as he uses the Law of Moses and the grace supplied through Christ to ensure that Christian believers live free from any form of condemnation.

The key words in the passage are ‘ righteousness’ and ‘ faith’. Righteousness has been mentioned four times in the passage, while faith has been mentioned three times. This reveals that Paul wanted to emphasize on the importance of being righteous to be a partaker in the kingdom of God and at the same time, having faith that you can accomplish this. Paul was mainly talking about the justification of believers righteousness through faith. It was all about sin and how it is looked at in the context of a believer. Contrary to what the law of Moses emphasised on, Paul clarifies that being a believer does not make one prone to sin and temptations. He seeks to strengthen and encourage believers that falling short of the glory of God does not disqualify their status as believers.

The ministry of Paul revolved around encouraging those who were already in the faith. Many of them were not able to fulfil their mission on earth after falling into sin. Note that, in the scripture, Paul does not use the word falling into sin but rather falling short of the glory of God. This implies that, what many consider as sin, Paul puts it as falling short of the glory of God. This is meant to tell believers that when they fall into sin, it means they have

missed out on a particular responsibility. 'Falling short' means, slipping in a certain area and not all areas. Paul sort to distinguish between a person who has never heard about the gospel, and one who has heard about it, but failed to observe its principles. A sinner is a person who is living in ignorance of the message of salvation. However, what Paul is talking about is a believer who has heard about the gospel but failed to observe certain aspects.

The problem Paul is addressing in the scripture is not necessarily sin itself but the lack of faith. Righteousness can only be obtained through faith, where a believer has to have that confidence of living a life of purity. Paul in his earlier scriptures mentioned how the flesh and the spirit wrestle against each other. The flesh that covers man is drawn towards sin, yet his spirit is drawn towards righteousness, the flesh and the spirit are all part of the human being that he cannot run away from. The two, however wrestle against each other, each wanting to gratify some desires. The flesh is the physical body, while the spirit is the immortal body. What is hence required for a believer is to have faith that he or she is able to conquer the desires of the flesh and live a righteous life.

Now, when Paul talks about faith, he means believing the word of God.

Believing the word of God can only come through reading it diligently and frequently. For a believer to have faith in the word of God, then he needs to occupy his mind with scriptures and seek to understand what it means.

Frequent reading of the word renews the mind of the believer and hence making it difficult for the flesh to dominate against them. Faith is also accompanied by observing a prayer life. It is only through reading the word and praying that will make the spirit of a believer a life and hence making

the flesh dormant.

When a believer falls short of the glory of God, it implies that they have failed in observing a life of prayer and reading the word of God. Once such a lifestyle is compromised, the flesh takes over, making the believer prone to sin. Having failed in such an area does not therefore disqualify a believer from righteousness. He or she can once again regain and be reinstated when he reads the word. A believer needs to repent, pray and persist reading the word. The more they read the word, the more faith is birthed in them and become the righteous of God. On the contrary, whenever they fall short of the word of God in their spirit, they give the flesh dominion over their lives and hence falling into temptations.

The message of salvation has been interpreted differently by people because of the cultural background the bible was written. The bible uses numerous symbols and cultural language that has brought a lot of confusion on who exactly has been delivered through the death of Jesus. Romans 3: 21-26 is one of the scriptures that Paul helped the people to understand how the message of salvation applies to them. God created the first man, Adam and Eve, from which the rest of the human generation came from. Therefore, when he defiled himself through disobedience, all his seed was corrupted. It is through this that Paul emphasized that there is no difference between generations and cultures. We are all corrupted through the seed of Adam and we need redemption. Anybody who has not accepted Christ as his saviour is still wearing the sinful nature. Obtaining such salvation, as Paul puts it in verse 22, requires faith.

The reason why this is referred to as a step of faith is that many people, up

to now, still do not believe that Jesus was the promised messiah. People had different expectations of who the messiah would be and when he came in a form they least expected, they rejected him. There are various scriptures that have been used to prove that Jesus was indeed the messiah, yet many cannot still believe that God could come in the form of a man and through a carpenter. The first step towards receiving such redemption is hence believing that Jesus was indeed the son of God and that he was sent to deliver us from the curse of sin. This is a faith that needs to be applied especially by many generations that did not have the privilege to behold the messiah (Howard 335). Salvation was not just about a certain group of people but the complete human generation.

Before the dispensation of Jesus, man operated on laws that were commonly referred to as the Law of Moses. Moses received these guidelines from God on Mount Horeb, when man was living in disobedience, yet justifying himself. God saw it fit to give man the do's and the don'ts that will ensure he lives in line and accordance to the word of God. The law was not just a set of guidelines but were also accompanied by punishment for failing to adhere to them. Unlike the present dispensation of Jesus and the Holy Spirit where there is a lot of grace and forgiveness of sin, during the law, there was no second chance for a person that walked contrary to the law. Once a person was found guilty of the mistake, the punishment would not just be on him but also on the generations to come. This hence created a lot of fear among the people, who could not stand the sight of God.

The initial plan of God looking at man as his friend and companion had been greatly compromised by the laws. God was now looked at as a cruel judge,

rather than a father he was meant to be. It was within God's plan to cover up the widened gap between him and man. There was no better way that God could show man that he still loved and cared for him, than to send his only begotten son to die for the sins of mankind. Jesus was presented as a sacrificial lamb and his blood was to provide atonement for the sins of man. The idea of the sacrifice came up because of the custom that the people had been exposed to. Whenever there was sin in the land and people cried to God for forgiveness, He would require them to slaughter an animal as a way of sacrifice. The shedding of blood was a sign of a new covenant between God and man. For the atonement of man to surpass the previous, God had to use the blood of his own son to signify the value of human righteousness. Jesus, in his state as God, was without sin and blameless. Even during his life on earth, he lived a blameless life, even though he was accused of very many things. His life was a demonstration of the endurance that Christians need to live in for them to obtain righteousness. Jesus lived an exemplary life and at the same time, took up the heavy burden of sin that man had. Just to prove that he did not only come for people of a specific culture, Jesus interacted with people from different status and cultural background. His ministry knew no boundaries and borders as he ministered to anyone who was ready and willing to receive from him. He demonstrated this to prove that his ministry was for everyone who believed that he was the son of God (Nygren 54). Many of the miracles that Jesus performed were based on the faith of the recipients rather than on His power. Even though he knew he had the power to heal, Jesus made sure that those he ministered to had faith in him and what he was capable of doing before manifesting.

There has always been questions of how much protection a believer is able to obtain from the blood. This is because of the nature of man that makes him vulnerable to sin on a daily basis. Believing and confessing Jesus to be the saviour has the power of imparting righteousness yet it does not make a believer to be immune to sin. However, a believer needs not to feel condemned after falling from the grace. Since Jesus paid for all sins, they can regain their righteousness through repentance. This also implies that Jesus did not just die for the past sin of man but also the present and the future. All that is required is for one to believe that he or she has already been forgiven from sin and embracing righteousness. Paul however warns believers against taking the grace of God for granted. Some believers have taken this scripture for granted and hence living in sin. Knowing that there is sufficient grace and that God will forgive them when they go wrong, they make it a habit to sin and seek repentance. The grace that believers obtain helps them to maintain their relationship with God as well as serve him with diligence.

The difference between living under law and under grace is the quick form of atonement that believers receive after falling. Under the law, there was no guarantee that a person would be forgiven and if it had to happen, then it had to be followed by long procedures. Such procedures included going to a specific priest and explaining the sin, depending on the magnitude of such sin, punishment would be given or series of sacrifices. Forgiveness of sin in the Law of Moses was hence an expensive affair that made life difficult for the people. The plan of God to bring salvation to man was to ensure he has direct communion with God. Man can now go to God directly after falling and



ask for forgiveness without going through a priest.

The symbolic act that signified that man could go directly to God was experienced when Jesus was crucified on the cross and was at the point of death. The bible mentions that the curtain of the temple in Jerusalem was broken into two. The curtain, according to the Jews culture acted as a barrier between the holy and the holly of hollies. This implies that the only people that could go beyond the curtain were to be very holly. The holly of hollies was a place where the presence of God dwelt and no sin could be tolerated. The righteous requirement of the priests was so paramount that they were tied to a rope and had to wear bells as they went to perform the rituals. When the people could no longer hear the bells, they knew that the priest had died due to unrighteousness and therefore had to be pulled by the ropes. Nobody was allowed to the holly of hollies except the priest, who also had to be in right standing.

The symbolic act of the curtain being torn into two signified that the requirements to enter into holiness and righteousness had been broken. Jesus had paid the price of sin for all human kind and we could approach the throne with all boldness. A believer did not have to go through a priest to be forgiven or present his supplications to God. Through Jesus, all believers had been made righteous through the blood he shed on the cross. One of the symbolic actions that have to be maintained by believers is partaking of the Lords table. This is also an act of faith where believers acknowledge the fact that Jesus died for their sins. The symbolic act of the Lord's Table is a time where believers eat of the body and drink of the blood of Jesus. As they engage in such a spiritual act, they remember the death and the resurrection

of Jesus through which they were made the righteous of God.

Taking of Holy Communion is also a symbol of unity where believers can share and commemorate on their salvation. Before partaking of the Lords table, believers are supposed to ensure that they are in the right standing with God through repentance. It is hence a way of healing and supplication. After sharing Holy Communion, a believer can believe that he or she has received his healing and deliverance. Taking of the Holy Communion is considered one of the most sacred moments of a believer where he has to search himself before taking of the communion. Taking of the element in unworthy manner can bring condemnation and judgement to a believer. By this statement, it also implies that God does not judge believers but instead, they bring judgment to themselves through their actions. God gives believers simple steps they can follow for them to obtain such righteousness. As they search their hearts, they only need to acknowledge that they are sinners and ask God for forgiveness. They also need to believe that such a simple prayer has given them the redemption they need. After taking communion, a believer is said to be one with God.

The Pharisees approached Jesus to ask him concerning the teachings of the law. The aim of the Pharisees was to confirm whether Jesus supported the Law of Moses or was against it. In his response, Jesus clarified that he did not come to destroy the law but instead to strengthen it. Jesus was engaged in some activities that the Pharisees thought were contrary to the teachings of the law. They included healing on the Sabbath and even interacted with those that were considered to sinners. Jesus helped people understand how the Law of Moses applied to their life. After many incidences of doing

contrary to what they believed was the law, the Pharisees sought to kill Jesus (Laato 205). Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for knowing so much of the law yet not walking according to it. It can hence be concluded one of the most supporting incidences that agitated the killing of Jesus was because of the law. The Pharisees could not stand what they thought were teachings that were contrary to the Law of Moses.

When Jesus was crucified on the cross, he did not just bear the sins of humanity but also nailed the law on the cross. This implied that people will no longer be judged by the law but live under grace. The laws that made it difficult for people to reach the holly of hollies and even have communion with God was nailed on the cross. During his journey to the cross and while he was on the cross, Jesus had to endure a lot of pain and assault. A crown of thorns was put on his head to signify the humiliation that he bore. While he underwent all this, the bible says, he was like a sheep being taken to the slaughterhouse. He did not open his mouth to complain or protest (Dunn 1957). Jesus knew that he had to endure such shame and humiliation so that man is reconciled to God. It pleased God that his only son goes through all this so that the work of salvation is accomplished on the cross.

There is a lot of significance that the cross has to Christian believers on their faith. For instance, being nailed on the cross in Jews culture was form of a curse. The death on the cross was hence a symbol of nailing all the cures that put on man at the cross. The bitter wine he drank symbolised the pain he endured for our sake. As Jesus took his last breath of life, he said it is finished. Jesus was glad at the fact that he was able to accomplish the assignment that he was given by the father. It was a hard task that involved

sacrifice and pain. So painful was the task that two times, in the garden Gethsemane, Jesus prayed that the cup would be taken away from him. The burden of sin was so heavy on him that as he prayed, sweat in form of blood droplets was seen on his face. The hour had come for him to be forsaken by the father as he focused on man. The task was hence finished at the cross, the broken relationship between man and God was restored. Man was once again free to approach God directly without fear and condemnation. All this could however only be made possible for those who believed in Jesus.

Through the scripture of Romans 3: 21-26, we realise that faith an important ingredient in Christian walk. There are many things in scripture that a believer may not be able to confirm or understand, but by believing that they are true, he or she is able to obtain the salvation needed. After making a simple prayer of confession, a person should believe that they have obtained righteousness irrespective of the sin they have committed. Christians have also been granted sufficient grace to enable them live a blameless and sinless life. Having walked physically through life, God knows what it feels to live a righteous life in a corrupted world. He has hence provided sufficient grace through His holy spirit. Every sinner has the boldness to come to the throne of grace through faith in repentance and obtain righteousness. “

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8: 1-3). It does not matter the length of time that a person has been a Christian, they can be

partakers of the same grace given to all Christians once they acknowledge Jesus as their saviour.

Looking at the different dispensations of the bible and how God manifested himself to man, it is clear that he desired to have a closer and long lasting relationship with man. God has revealed himself as a father who punishes and forgives. Even though many times he got so angry that he poured wrath upon man, he had a permanent plan that ensure the relationship is maintained. Being the sovereign creator, God requires true worship, which has to be displayed through obedience and loyalty. The only way that man can prove his allegiance to God is by trusting in him even when he cannot physically see Him. this is the kind of faith that God has always required from man in order to work in and through him.

## **Works cited**

Dunn, James DG. " The new perspective on Paul." HTS Theological Studies 64. 4 (2008): 1956-1958.

Howard, George E. " Christ the End of the Law: The Meaning of Romans 10: 4 ff." Journal of Biblical Literature (1969): 331-337.

Laato, A. " Paul's theology of " righteousness through faith" in the context of Tanak and Jewish interpretive traditions." Ancient Israel, Judaism, and Christianity in Contemporary Perspective: essays in memory of Karl-Johan Illman (195-224). University Press of America (2006).

Nygren, Anders. Commentary on Romans. Augsburg Fortress Pub, 1949.