



Our sin. God's justice and love

Romans 3:21-26 – Leaders version

For a one hour study, just do the starred * questions

Check in – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

*1. Recap the end of the last study – what does God's law do? (Romans 3:20)

Remind the group that we're talking about God's law (10 commandments etc.) not today's legal system.

God's law was given to make us conscious (aware) of our sin.

What does the passage say and mean?

90 minutes

Read Romans 3:21-26. It's probably best if you read this to the group, as it can be a hard passage to follow if not read clearly.

*2. Read Romans 3:21. What has now been made known and what does Paul mean?

'A righteousness from God, apart from law' – a way to become right with God, which does not involve us working to keep the law perfectly (since nobody can).

3. What does Paul mean when he says that the Law and the Prophets testify to this?

'The Law and the Prophets' means the OT – Paul is saying that the OT points towards this righteousness by faith. This is really important for us to understand, to see God's big picture of salvation – his rescue plan had been spoken of for thousands of years. The original readers would have read it with even more significance, as the Jews were waiting for the one who would save them, and Paul is telling them that their wait is over.

*4. Read Romans 3:22. How do we get right with God, if it isn't by 'being good'?

'Through faith in Jesus Christ'. A chance to recap the gospel!

God created everything – good and sinless, including people.

The first people, Adam and Eve, sinned (rebelled against God) and thus sin entered the world.

Sin comes from inside us, Mark 7:21-23. We are not sinners because we sin, we sin because we

*are sinners. We are all sinners – we all live in rebellion against God.
God is angry at sin, Romans 5:9. Death is the penalty for sin, Gen 3:19.
Jesus is the Son of God – he is actually God. He lived a life of obedience to God and he died on a
cross to pay the penalty for our sin, Mark 10:45.
He rose from the dead, proving that the price for sin (death) had been paid and that he had opened
the way for eternal life for all who follow him.
If we believe and trust in Jesus' death on our behalf, our sins have been paid for, we are forgiven
and God sees in us Jesus' obedience, not our disobedience, Romans 3:22.*

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How do you feel about this gift of being made right with God in a way that doesn't depend on you at all?

Encourage non-believers to talk about how they feel first – do they believe the offer is genuine, what is stopping them from accepting the gift?

Then encourage believers to talk about what it's like to receive the gift of grace and know you are forgiven.

*5. Read Romans 3:23. What is the problem with sin?

It causes us to fall short of the glory of God.

6. What do you think it means to say that we 'fall short of the glory of God'?

*God's glory in this context is 'the manifested perfection of his character, especially his righteousness' (Vine).
To fall short of this is to fail to live up to the image in which we were made.*

*7. Read Romans 7:19. What problem does Paul have?

*He does what he doesn't want to do and he doesn't do what he wants to do – he's still struggling with sin.
Explain that this isn't just Paul's problem – it's every Christian's problem.*

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Have you ever thought about how your thoughts, words and actions can glorify (honour) God?

Encourage the group to respond personally and think about how their thoughts, words and actions currently do / do not glorify God, and what might need to change. Help them to set achievable (SMART) goals for the next week.

*8. Read Romans 3:22-23 again. Who needs to be saved by faith in Jesus?

Everyone – 'all have sinned'. We may not be equally sinful, but we are equally condemned.

9. God is very specific about what we must have faith in in order to be made righteous (be saved) – what do Romans 3:22 & 3:25 tell us?

Faith in Christ Jesus, v22. But not just a belief that Jesus walked the earth, v25 specifies faith in the blood of Christ i.e. in the sacrifice he made on our behalf when he died.

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What would you say to someone who said that Jesus was just a good teacher who came to a sticky end?

Use this question to find out how much your group has understood about how we are saved. Belief in the physical existence of God and of a man called Jesus who taught good things is not enough to save us.

10. What is the cost of being justified by God's grace? (v24)

(Justified = made righteous / right with God, saved).

The cost to us = nothing. It's a gift. The only thing it costs us is our surrender as we admit we can't save ourselves and accept the gift.

The cost to God = unmeasurable. The death of his Son.

*11. Read Romans 3:25. What does God's justice demand?

God's justice demands that sin be punished. Although there had been sacrifices for sins, and discipline for / consequences of sin, most notably the exile, the full payment for sin had not yet been paid.

Atonement – 'bringing those who are estranged into a unity', NBD.

*12. Why couldn't God just forget about punishing sin and let us all off?

Think about God being both just and loving.

- *If God was just but not loving, we would be destroyed because our sin is so offensive to God.*
- *If God was loving but not just, there would be no punishment for sin because God wouldn't mind our sin. But to not care about our rebellion is to not love!*

God's justice is fulfilled at the cross – sin is paid for. God's love is demonstrated at the same time – sin was paid for, not by the guilty ones, but by God himself.

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Are you more likely to forget that God is just or that God is loving?

How does this distort your view of God?

Forgetting God is just – we think we can get away with anything / God is indifferent to what we do.

Forgetting God is loving – we live in fear of God and his wrath.

*13. Read Romans 3:22 again. When we repent and believe, we are forgiven for our sin *and* given Jesus' obedience ('this righteousness from God')! How does this make you feel?

NB Having Christ's obedience doesn't mean we have stopped sinning, rather that God credits us with Christ's obedience, not our disobedience. Therefore we are right with God, even though we are still sinners. Justification is not sanctification.

Check out – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

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