

Does the Bible Say That?

Romans 3:21-31

The Issue: How can a perfectly righteous God save sinners without forfeiting his claim that he is perfectly just?

Introduction

To be perfectly just assumes the innocent are always spared and the guilty are always punished.

Proverbs 17:15, "He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord."

The problem

No-one is innocent, all are guilty, but some of the guilty are saved. How, then, can God be called "perfectly just" since he saves the guilty?

Definitions & Questions

1. What is Paul's main point in 3:9-20?
2. What is the "righteousness of God" in vv. 21-22? Is "his righteousness" the same in v. 25?
3. Look carefully at v. 25 and define these terms and answer these questions:
 - Passed over...forbearance, *parein* (#3929)
 - Demonstrate, *endeixin* (#1732)
 - Propitiate, *hilasterion* (#2435)
4. What are "former sins" in v. 25? [NASB, "passed over the sins previously committed"]. Why and how did he "pass over" these sins?
5. What role does forbearance play in the idea being conveyed in 3:25?
6. Describe the purpose of this passing over. Is he still passing over any sins today? See Acts 17:30.
7. Do people believe today that God overlooks things we do in our lives? What are some examples either way?
8. If God passed over sins in the past and saves sinners (5:8), how can he be called a "just" God? Answer from the text.
 - Why is this important?

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it — ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 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. ²⁷ Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. ²⁸ For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one—who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.