

# ROMANS

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

ROMANS 3:21–26

## WHATEVER IT TAKES

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Mystery (the “sacred”) is at the heart of the Christian faith. This means that saving faith must be gifted to us by the Holy Spirit. We cannot, on our own accord, believe in the ancient confessions of the faith and be reconciled to God. It is faith in Christ that reconciles us to faith. Because of this, we cannot allow for human traditions (even good ones!) to prevent people from coming to faith in Jesus. We must do whatever it takes to bring the message of reconciliation to the world, even sacrifice traditions that are not essential to salvation.

### 2.0 ROMANS 3:21–24

#### 2.1 BUT NOW...

Paul understood history as having two distinct parts. The age of the flesh and the age of the Spirit. Jesus put an end to the age of the flesh. The new age of the Spirit has come. The old way of doing things is over and the new way is here. This is a reminder that when we become Christians, there is supposed to be a radical break from our former selves that were citizens in the Kingdom of Darkness (Colossians 1:13).

#### 2.2 THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

There are two problems in the world—before Jesus—that Paul has in mind when he’s talking about the righteousness of God. The first is the problem relates to the Jews, and that is that God made promises to Abraham that—prior to Jesus—had not been fulfilled. He promised Abraham that the nations of the world would be blessed through him (i.e., his offspring). This means that all peoples would have the opportunity to be reconciled to God through Abraham’s family. Now,

through Jesus of Nazareth and his redeeming work on the cross, all the nations of the world have the opportunity (and billions have) of being reconciled to God, thereby demonstrating God’s faithfulness and righteousness.

When we sin purposefully—when we fail to obey God in forgiving others and loving our enemies—we contribute to the evil in the world. To suggest that we cannot help but sin (i.e., willingly disobey God), is to say that Christ in me isn’t enough to bring healing to the world.

#### 2.3 THOUGH THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS TESTIFY TO IT...

The law and the prophets brought flashes of hope that God had not forgotten his promise. When things seem the darkest and it appears as if God has forgotten his promises, he gives us flashes of hope. See the story of Ruth as a wonderful example of this.

#### 2.4 JUSTIFIED BY HIS GRACE AS A GIFT

Our saving faith is a gift. We cannot bring ourselves to believe in the miraculous redemptive events in history (e.g., virgin birth, Trinity, bodily resurrection, etc.). It is only by the help of the Holy Spirit that we’re able to have the kind of trust in God required for reconciliation with him (1 Cor. 12:3).

Similarly, Paul is dealing with the problem of Jewish Christians wanting to demand that others obey the cultural code of Judaism to be saved. Paul insists that faith in Jesus is the only way. Yes, there are special things about Judaism, but all of those special things merely point to Jesus.

We can have special things about our traditions that we love and have been a source of spiritual nourishment to us.

We can’t love methodism and our preferences more than Jesus. We have to always point to Jesus and do whatever it takes to do so.

### 3.0 CONCLUSION: WHATEVER IT TAKES

1. **Holiness.** The Christian life is a call to holiness. It is a call to having a clean break from the former life in the “flesh” (being enslaved to the sin condition). We must be willing to put our hand to the plow and not look back.

2. **Humility.** Because our faith is a gift, we should never have spiritual pride or arrogance. Faith is a gift, not something we earn. We are what we are to the glory of God and by his righteousness. This should cause us to be slow to judge and quick to accommodate.
3. **Hope.** There are times when things seem dark. There are times when we are tempted to think that God may not fulfill his promises. Look for the flashes of hope! He will provide them!
4. **Whatever It Takes.** When it comes to making adjustments to the way we worship to help us reach the unreached, our should have the attitude reflective of a willingness to do whatever it takes. Our preferences must be second to the urgency of saving souls.