

## The Scandal of Forgiveness

“<sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>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. <sup>26</sup>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.”

## The APPEARANCE of Scandal

## Where THE REAL Scandal Lies

## The Unfathomable SOLUTION

“Both love and law have triumphed. The one has not given way to the other. Each has kept its ground; each [is]... honored and glorified. Never has there been love like this love of God – so large, so lofty, so intense, so self-sacrificing. [Yet], never has the law been seen so pure, so broad, so glorious, so inexorable. There has been no compromise. Law and Love have both had their full scope. Not one jot or tittle has been surrendered to the full; the one in all its severity, the other in all its tenderness. Love has never been more truly love, and the law has never been more truly law, than in this conjunction of the two.” – Horatius Bonar, *The Everlasting Righteousness*

**Justification:** a one-time irreversible act of God's free grace for guilty sinners, in which he forgives all our sins (even the ones we haven't committed yet!) and declares us perfectly righteous in His sight (even though we continue to fall terribly short of His righteousness!). He declares us perfectly righteous and therefore acceptable, not because we presently obey or are getting better, but only because of the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Jesus, which God credits to us when we receive Jesus by faith alone. This declaration is a pledge and promise of what God will practically make us one day: perfectly righteous like Jesus. Until then, this declaration is the foundation for all moral improvement in our lives, though we continue to fall short.

## Small Group Questions

### Read Romans 3:23-26

1. Look at verse 26. The gospel lets God be both *just* and the *justifier* of sinful people. What does it mean for God to be *just*?

2. Discuss how we normally use the word “justify” by

a) Looking up the definition of the word in an English dictionary.

b) Also, in your search engine (under the “news” tab), search for “justify” and discuss how it’s used.

c) Examine how the following passages fit this common definition of the word: Matthew 12:33-37 Luke 7:33-35; Acts 19:40-41.

3. Scripture warns against people attempting to *justify themselves* or *others* when we or they are bad.

a) Where do you see that in the following verses: Proverbs 17:15; Luke 10:25-29; Luke 16:14&15.

b) Where, in our common human experience, do we condemn those trying to treat or declare bad people like they are good people?

4. At the center of the gospel is the claim that *God justifies the ungodly* (cf. Romans 4:5).

a) Without God doing something very special, why would this make God unjust?

b) Our passage suggests he let himself look unjust (vs. 25). How so? Why?

5. Under normal circumstances, treating or declaring a bad person as a good person is an abomination. Verse 25 says that the “propitiation” of Jesus lets God do that for us in a way that vindicates his righteousness.

a) What does “propitiation” mean?

b) How does it let God maintain his righteousness when he justifies us?

6. Why can't we propitiate ourselves? Discuss how verse 23 helps you answer this.

7. Why can only God, in Jesus, do this for us?

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## Resources

Romans: *Righteousness from Heaven* | R. Kent Hughes.

www.blueletterbible.org | [www.preceptaustin.org](http://www.preceptaustin.org)