The Description of God’s Plan

Romans 3:21-31

Introduction:

I. God’s Plan of Salvation is Revealed – 3:21–23

A. It is Thoroughly Scriptural – 3:3:21

1. It Conforms to the Standards of the Law – 3:21a

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law.”

“But now” – is in contrast to v. 20 - “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight” – “But now” – apart from the Law, comes righteousness.

One of the ways to speak of the whole O.T. was, “the Law (the first 5 books) and the Prophets. It is witnessed from the Law - Abraham “Abraham believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.” (Gen 15.6)

Under the Law of Moses they received the sacrificial system, in which, through animal sacrifices, sins were covered but not taken away.

Hebrews 10:4

“For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.”

2. It Conforms to the Statements from the Prophets – 3:21b

*Being witnessed by* “and the prophets”.

David wrote, “Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity,” (Psalm.32:1-2)

Paul’s wrote:

“…just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:” (Romans 4:4-8)

B. It is Thoroughly Suitable – 3:22–23

1. It is Unique in its Approach – 3:22

a. It is through Faith Alone, without Works

“even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ,”

He doesn’t add anything to that faith. If he did, faith would no longer be faith. (Eph. 2:8-9)

It is unique in that it is totally free. All other religions (no exceptions) require works for salvation, including many who claim to believe the entire Bible.

b. It Comes to All who Believe without Distinction

“to all who believe. For there is no difference;”

No difference between whom? Jew and Gentile. This anticipates the Jew-Gentile emphasis coming later on.

2. It is Universal in its Appeal – 3:23

“for all {have} sinned and continually fall short of the glory of God.”

“All sinned” - Aorist- point action. This phrase does not simply mean that everyone has committed sins. The same two words are in Rom. 5:12. There it clearly means that all sinned in Adam.

I stress this because some say that we are sinners because we commit sins. Not true –

* We are not sinners because we sin;
* We sin because we are sinners - IN ADAM.

We also continually (present tense) “fall short of the glory of God.”

Here is the dilemma:

God loves the human race. God is holy; Man is sinful; God must judge sin. The price for sin must be paid. The price for sin is death. Man must die!

God became a man in the person of Jesus, lived a sinless life as a man. Then died for the human race -- Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)

“that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them. (2 Cor. 5:19)

See also 5:21 – “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

II. God’s Plan of Salvation is Righteous – 3:24–26

It does not ignore man’s condition, it meets it “head-on” by paying the price by the death of a substitute, Jesus Christ.

1. The Ruined Condition of Man – 3:24–26a

Salvation is therefore based on:

1. A Remarkable Principle – 3:24a

“being justified freely by His grace”

“Grace” is used 24 times in Romans. The word “Grace” means unmerited favor. Rather- Favor in spite of demerit.

Justification means “to declare righteous.” - That is our standing in Christ

“Not make righteous” - that comes when our state matches our standing.

Justification has been defined as: “Just as if I’d never sinned” - that misses a large part of justification. “Unfallen Angels” fit that definition. They have never sinned and they stand before a thrice-holy God. (Isaiah 6)

But, we had sinned (in Adam) and were headed for eternal damnation and have been forgiven in Christ. That’s a whole “nother” thing.

2. A Redemptive Price – 3:24b–25a

“through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith.”

There are three results of the atonement:

* Sin-ward – Redemption (A ransom payment)
* Man-ward - Reconciliation
* God-ward - Propitiation = satisfaction - ἱλασμός mercy-seat Heb 9:5

Remember the price for sin is death. Our substitute, Jesus, paid that debt in full on the cross. We receive it by faith, i.e. believing in Jesus for our forgiveness and eternal life.

John 3:16. Say it with me … [See the 10 sermons “What is the Grace Gospel” on the church website (see back of the church bulletin].

3. A Royal Proclamation – 3:25b–26a

“to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,”

Because of His future plan of salvation God did not punish the sins of people with eternal death prior to the cross. The animals were sacrificed as pictures of the one sacrifice that was to come. They stretched from Genesis 3, the sacrifice of a lamb to cover their nakedness to the sacrifice on the Passover just prior to the death of Jesus on the cross. This “forbearance” was an evidence of God’s grace.

“to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness,”

Paul is saying that “now that Jesus has died on the cross it can be seen that God is righteous in justifying sinful mankind.

B. The Righteous Character of God – 3:26b

“that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

The righteous character of God is intact. All mankind is not automatically saved. That salvation must be accepted by faith.

But the payment for their sin has been made. They simply have to go to Jesus and receive the gift that has been waiting for them since Jesus paid the price.

III. God’s Plan of Salvation is Reasonable – 3:27–31)

A. It Eliminates All Human Pride – 3:27–28

“Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.”

Faith is a fact of life. We exercise it every day in multiple ways. But all of those ways are not saving faith. The faith that saves is the faith that is placed in Jesus, the Christ.

* It is placed in the same person, Jesus.
* It is the same amount of faith.
* It is not how much faith I have.
* It is the object of the faith- Jesus

First John puts it like this:

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son. And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.” (1 John 5:9-13)

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” (3:28)

He Jews were proud of their keeping of the law. However, not one of them ever kept it all. And to fail in one part is to fail in all.

The salvation by grace through faith excludes all boasting. Jesus paid it all – all to Him I owe. The ground at the foot of the cross is completely level. No one stands any higher than any other.

B. It Eliminates All Human Prejudice – 3:29–30

“Or *is He* the God of the Jews only? *Is He* not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since *there is* one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.”

The Jew has no greater position than the Gentile and vice-versa. In the church there is neither:

* Jew nor Greek
* Male or Female
* Bond or Free (Gal. 3:28)
* All are children of God by faith, not by works.

C. It Eliminates All Human Presumption – 3:31

“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”

We don’t make the Law void by believing on Jesus for eternal life. It was not the purpose of the law to save. It’s purpose was to condemn. And it did a great job of that.

The Law is established by preparing people for salvation. No one can be saved who does not see his sinfulness. The purpose of the Law is to reveal that condition to the sinner. Once the sinner has seen that and has come in faith to Jesus and is saved, he has established the Law by using it lawfully.

Thus, Salvation is by grace through faith, plus not one thing!

Conclusion: