

**Justification, Union, and Dwelling:  
Reading Romans 3:21–26 with Theological Literacy  
(Exod 19:4–6, Acts 26:18, Eph 2:19–22)<sup>1</sup>**

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This is a pre-publication working paper, expanded from the original Korean article published in *Journal of Christian Philosophy* 44 (2026).

I. Introduction

II. Foreshadowing in Romans and Canonical–Narrative Theological Literacy

III. Canonical Integration with Romans’ Foreshadowing

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ABSTRACT

This article offers a canonical–narrative reading of Romans 3:21–26 that resists treating δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (“the righteousness of God”) as an isolated doctrinal fragment and instead situates it within a redemptive sequence of Exodus–union–dwelling. Redemption (Rom 3:24) evokes the “liberation–covenant” pattern of Exodus 19:4–6, while ἱλαστήριον (3:25) activates the mercy-seat/temple motif. The twofold ἔνδειξις clauses (3:25–26) publicly and forensically display God’s righteousness, thereby legitimating the imputation of righteousness. On this judicial basis, the “forgiveness–transfer of dominion” schema of Acts 26:18 unfolds as σὺν-union and issues in the σὺν-series and the construction of the κατοικητήριον in Ephesians 2:19–22 as the public marker of God’s dwelling. Romans 3:21–26 thus coheres as a triadic structure of imputation (ground) → transfer/union (application) → dwelling/temple (result).

Methodologically, the study (1) treats the double ἔνδειξις clauses as a contextual hinge within Romans 3:21–26—binding together the source-genitive gift of vv. 21–22 and the subjective-genitive demonstration of vv. 25–26—while at the same time functioning as a canonical hinge that links Exod 19:4–6, Acts 26:18, and Eph 2:19–22, and (2) reads δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in terms of contextual complementarity: in 3:21–22 as a source genitive (righteousness granted to believers) and in 3:25–26 as a subjective genitive (God’s public demonstration of his own righteousness). Likewise, πίστις Ἰησοῦ / ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ are interpreted by role complementarity, with Christ’s faithfulness providing the

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<sup>1</sup> This article is an expanded English version of my Korean study, “Reading Romans 3:21–26 with Theological Literacy: A Canonical–Narrative Frame from Exod 19:4–6, Acts 26:18, and Eph 2:19–22,” originally published in *Journal of Christian Philosophy* 44 (2026). The present version has been revised for an international readership, with further clarification of theological argumentation and narrative–linguistic analysis.

forensic ground and faith in Christ functioning as the means of incorporation.

On this basis, the article argues that imputation (ground), transfer/union (application), and dwelling/temple formation (result) form an integrated canonical grid that both preserves the New Perspective's emphasis on covenantal faithfulness and maintains the full forensic force of Rom 3:25–26. In this way, צדקה–משפט (covenantal justice and righteousness) are not abolished but carried forward and transposed into the New Testament as the Spirit's temple-building work, becoming visible as the "righteous requirement of the law" fulfilled in believers (Rom 8:4; Eph 2:22).

This canonical grid challenges reductionistic readings of Romans 3 that end with imputation alone and shows how justification unfolds toward union, transformation, and Spirit-formed communal life.

**Key words:** Romans 3:21–26; *righteousness of God*; δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ; *justification*; *imputation*; *union with Christ*; *temple/dwelling motif*; *canonical–narrative theology*; *New Perspective on Paul*; *Exodus motif*.

## I. Introduction

Luther read the δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in Romans 3:21 along the same line as 1:17<sup>2</sup>—not as the "active righteousness" by which God punishes sinners, but as the righteousness given in the gospel to the believer: an alien righteousness (extra nos) forensically imputed to us as a gift.<sup>3</sup> Justification, therefore, is God's judicial declaration, and the believer is accounted righteous through the imputation of Christ's righteousness.<sup>4</sup> This interpretation was formally articulated in the Augsburg Confession, Article IV (Justification), and confirmed and expanded as normative doctrine in the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article IV.<sup>5</sup>

Traditional Protestantism has primarily read δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as a source genitive,<sup>6</sup> emphasizing

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2 In this article, unless otherwise indicated, all bare verse references ("v. x") are to Romans 3.

3 Traditionally termed *iustitia passiva* ("passive righteousness"), which underscores the mode of reception (received by faith). By contrast, *iustitia aliena* and *extra nos* designate source/location (the righteousness is outside us, in Christ). "Imputed forensic righteousness" specifies the mode of application (imputation by God's judicial declaration). For a Korean discussion see: Dongsoo Kim, *Romans Commentary*. (Daejeon: Eldoron, 2013), 65–76.

4 Christ's "accomplished righteousness" is immediately imputed in union with Christ, effecting a forensic status-change (justification), and—by the same union—issues in transformative change and fruit through the indwelling Spirit (Rom 6–8; 8:9–11; Eph 2:19–22). This change is not an automatic mechanism but unfolds within the dwelling/temple (κατοικητήριον) pattern as the covenantal order of union—the focus of this study.

5 Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, ed./trans. Wilhelm Pauck (London: SCM Press, 1961), 17–19; Martin Luther, "Preface to the Complete Edition of Luther's Latin Writings (1545)," in *Luther's Works*, vol. 34 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), 336–38; Henry Eyster Jacobs, ed., *The Book of Concord; or, The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: The United Lutheran Publication House, 1911; facsimile repr., Lutheran Library Publishing Ministry, 2020), "Augsburg Confession," Art. IV, 39; "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," Art. IV, 84–103.

6 Source genitive: The genitive marks origin/source. Thus δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ denotes "the righteousness that comes from God," i.e., the righteousness imputed (given) to the believer (3:21–22; cf. Phil 3:9, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην). This aligns with the classic Protestant forensic/imputational reading. For instance, C. E. B.

the righteousness "from God" that is given to the believer (imputation). By contrast, Ernst Käsemann, noting that ἔνδειξις ("demonstration/manifestation")<sup>7</sup> occurs twice in Romans 3:25–26,<sup>8</sup> reformulated the phrase as a subjective genitive<sup>9</sup>—that is, "the righteousness which God does/acts." On this reading the focus falls on the public/forensic manifestation of God's own righteousness—namely, that "he is righteous and also the one who justifies" (3:26).<sup>10</sup>

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Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), and Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1955/1965), interpret "the righteousness of God" in Romans 3:21–26 primarily as the forensic righteousness imputed to the believer.

7 Ἐνδειξις (fem., gen. -εως): BDAG gives "demonstration, proof, showing, indication." Paul uses it only four times in the New Testament, and each carries a public/forensic nuance: Rom 3:25, 26 (public demonstration of God's righteousness), Phil 1:28 ("a clear sign" of their destruction and your salvation), 2 Cor 8:24 ("proof" of love). The cognate verb ἐνδείκνυμι/ἐνδείκνυμαι ("to show, demonstrate") supports this sense. See Frederick W. Danker (ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 331–332, s.v. ἔνδειξις

8 This study presupposes Romans 3:21–26 as a whole, but the detailed syntactic and semantic analysis focuses on the double purpose clause of ἔνδειξις in vv. 25–26. Verses 21–24 are treated in summary form as the manifestation and scope of God's righteousness. The Greek text and punctuation follow NA28/UBS5.

Rom 3:25–26: <sup>3:25</sup> ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἰλαστήριον διὰ πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι, εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ· <sup>26</sup> πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιῶντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ.

- ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἰλαστήριον: "whom God publicly set forth as ἰλαστήριον (mercy seat/atoning place)" — indicating God's intention and the means.
- διὰ πίστεως: "through faith" — the channel of reception and application.
- ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι: "in His blood" — the sphere and mediating agent of realization.
- εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ: "for the demonstration of His righteousness" — the purpose clause.
- διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων: "because of the passing over of previously committed sins" — the rationale explaining why such a demonstration was necessary.
- ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ: "in the forbearance of God" — the context in which such passing-over occurred.
- πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ: "toward the demonstration of His righteousness in the present time" — the reiterated purpose, now highlighting the present, public manifestation.
- εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιῶντα: "so that He might be just and the One who justifies" — the theological telos.
- τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ: "the one who is of faith in Jesus" — the phrase involving the well-known genitive debate.
- The notation εἰς/πρὸς [τὴν] ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ is used to treat together both Rom 3:25 (εἰς ἔνδειξιν, without the article) and Rom 3:26 (πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν, with the article), thereby indicating the twofold (past and present) demonstrative purpose expressed through parallel constructions.

9 Subjective genitive: The genitive noun (θεοῦ) functions as the subject/agent of the verbal idea embedded in the head noun (here, the "operation" of righteousness).

10 Items 1)–5) represent prior and integrative research, and item 6) constitutes the contribution of the present study.

- 1) Form: the frame is preposition (εἰς/πρὸς) + object ([τὴν] ἔνδειξιν) + genitive (τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ).
- 2) v.25—retrospective demonstration: εἰς ἔνδειξιν shows that God's previous "passing over" of sins (πάρεσιν, forbearance) was not injustice, by the event of setting forth Christ as ἰλαστήριον "in his blood."
- 3)v.26—present demonstration: πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν ... ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ signals that the same event now publicly demonstrates God's righteousness.
- 4) Concluding clause: The manifestation of God's righteousness is revealed as a double fulfillment—both in the past and in the "now." Accordingly, God is shown to be "righteous and the one who justifies" (δίκαιον καὶ δικαιῶντα).
- 5) Grammatical implication: in this context τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ functions as a subjective genitive (God's own righteousness-in-action), and ἔνδειξις denotes its historical/forensic manifestation. References: BDAG, s.v. ἔνδειξις; C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (BNTC; London: Black, 1971), 72–73; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary 38A (Dallas: Word Books, 1988). 161–183; J. A. Fitzmyer,

Reading δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (righteousness of God) as a source genitive shifts the center of gravity toward the notion of righteousness granted to believers (imputation as gift), with ἔνδειξις functioning as an auxiliary ground that publicly validates its legitimacy. Conversely, reading it as a subjective genitive makes ἔνδειξις the device that publicly demonstrates the historical manifestation of God's own righteousness. Käsemann does not deny forensic justification, but relocates it within the larger framework of God's public, salvific activity, thereby recovering an apocalyptic frame that transcends individualized or interiorized accounts of justification. In this reading, God's universal sovereignty is publicly disclosed in Christ, who defeats the powers of sin and death;<sup>11</sup> individual justification is then understood as participation in that victory-event.<sup>12</sup> This line of interpretation—emphasizing a “public–forensic demonstration”—has been variously received and developed in many major commentaries after Käsemann.<sup>13</sup>

In sum, the central debates surrounding Romans 3:21–26 can be reduced to two axes.

(a) Whether δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ should be understood as a source genitive (“the righteousness that comes from God” granted to believers) or a subjective genitive (“God's righteousness / His righteous action”).

(b) Whether πίστις Ἰησοῦ / ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ should be read as Christ's faith(fulness) (subjective genitive) or as faith in Christ (objective genitive), and whether its function is ground or means within Paul's argument.<sup>14</sup>

These two axes belong to different interpretive levels. Axis (a) concerns the referential direction of “the righteousness of God”—whether it points primarily to God's own righteous character or to the

*Romans* (AB 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 343–46; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013, e-book ed.), III. The Saving Righteousness of God (3:21–4:25) — A. “God's Righteousness in the Death of Jesus (3:21–26)”; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), eBook/PDF edition, PDF pp. 179–193.

6) Focus of this study: read v.24's ἀπολύτρωσις in light of Exodus 19:4–6 (liberation → covenant), and v.25's ἱλαστήριον as “mercy seat/propitiatory (cover)” rather than merely “propitiatory sacrifice,” thereby activating a temple-presence motif. This move shifts the discussion beyond a “mechanism of forgiveness” to the opening of God's place of presence in Christ, and it naturally extends to the dwelling (κατοικητήριον) construction of Ephesians 2:19–22.

11 Ephesians 1:10's “summing up of all things in Christ” resonates with Käsemann's apocalyptic frame (public display of sovereign rule). See also Ephesians 1:20–22; 3:10 on Christ's headship and the church's display before the heavenly powers; Col 2:15 on the rulers' “disarmament” and being “made a public spectacle;” 1 Corinthians 15:24–28 on final subjection/order.

12 Ernst Käsemann, “The Righteousness of God in Paul,” in *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM, 1969), 168–82; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 91–101.

13 Barrett, *Romans*, 72–73; Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 161–183; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 343–46; Schreiner, *Romans*, III. A. “God's Righteousness in the Death of Jesus (3:21–26).”; Moo, *Romans* (NICNT), PDF pp. 179–193.

14 The expression πίστις Ἰησοῦ is, in strictly literal terms, “the faith/faithfulness of Jesus.” When the genitive (Ἰησοῦ) is read as a subjective genitive, Jesus is the agent of the action, yielding the meaning “Jesus' faithfulness.” When taken as an objective genitive, “Jesus” becomes the object of the believer's faith, resulting in the meaning “faith in Jesus.” The related expression ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ contains the preposition ἐκ, which typically denotes origin or source (“from, out of”). Thus it may be read subjectively as “from Jesus' faithfulness” (indicating the ground of justification), or objectively as “from faith in Jesus” (indicating the believer's means of reception). For convenience, the two forms (πίστις Ἰησοῦ / ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ) are collectively referred to here as the “genitive debate” concerning the faith(fulness) of Jesus.

status granted to believers. Axis (b) concerns the agent and function of faith in justification—whether Christ’s faithfulness constitutes the ground, or whether the believer’s faith constitutes the means by which that justification is received.

The so-called New Perspective on Paul has shifted the starting point of the debate. E. P. Sanders re-evaluated Second Temple Judaism as a form of “covenantal nomism”—one “gets in” by grace and “stays in” by obedience—thereby reframing the background against which Paul should be interpreted. Building on this, James D. G. Dunn read “works of the law” primarily as covenant boundary markers (circumcision, food laws, festivals), redefining justification as the forensic declaration of who belongs to the covenant family. N. T. Wright further developed this approach by interpreting δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ as God’s covenantal faithfulness (a subjective genitive) and justification as God’s law-court verdict concerning covenant membership.<sup>15</sup>

This approach provides genuine insight, especially in reading “the righteousness of God” as covenantal faithfulness and in tracing how the Old Testament categories of צדקה–משפט (covenantal justice and righteousness) flow into the New Testament’s relational and communal structures of covenantal justice. At the same time, however, such a reading—precisely because it strongly foregrounds the subjective/covenantal-faithfulness interpretation in axis (a)—inevitably affects the genitive debate surrounding πίστις Ἰησοῦ / ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ in axis (b). In doing so, it risks weakening the forensic dimension of imputation, particularly the double ἔνδειξις clauses in Romans 3:25–26, which publicly and juridically demonstrate God’s righteousness.

The guiding question of this study, therefore, is as follows:

How does the “demonstration of God’s righteousness” (Rom 3:21–26) structurally cohere with the Exodus 19:4–6 pattern of liberation → covenant, with the Acts 26:18 schema of forgiveness → transfer, and with the Ephesian σὺν-series (“made alive with,” “raised with”)<sup>16</sup> that culminates in the construction of God’s dwelling? To ignore this narrative and canonical texture and to treat “imputation” in isolation is to reduce the soteriological framework Paul himself provides.

Accordingly, this study selectively appropriates the insights of the New Perspective—especially its attempt to read the righteousness of God as covenantal faithfulness and to trace the continuity of the Old Testament צדקה–משפט (covenantal justice and righteousness)<sup>17</sup> structure into the life of the New Testament community—while reconfiguring these insights within the literary and theological dynamics

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15 E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Fortress, 1977), 75; 419–29; 543; E. P. Sanders, “Covenantal Nomism Revisited,” *JBL* 128 (2009): 1–20. James D. G. Dunn, “The New Perspective on Paul,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 65 (1983): 95–122; Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, 161–183. N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* (Eerdmans, 1997), 113–133.

16 In Ephesians, a distinctive σὺν- (“with”) series articulates the progressive logic of union with Christ: συνεζωοποίησεν (“made alive together,” 2:5), συνήγειρεν (“raised together,” 2:6), συνεκάθισεν (from συγκαθίζω, “seated together,” 2:6), συμπολιταί (“fellow citizens,” 2:19), and συνοικοδομήσατε (“being built together,” 2:22). Those whom Christ has made alive are thus raised and seated with him, incorporated as fellow citizens, and built together into a dwelling of God by the Spirit—so that, ultimately, those whom he has enlivened are seated with him in the heavenly realms.

17 “Covenantal justice and righteousness” is used here to retain both the juridical dimension of משפט and the covenantal-relational dimension of צדקה, without reducing the pair to either abstract virtue-language or generic moral order.

of Romans 3:21–26 by a contextual-complementarity reading.

First, vv. 21–22 are read as a source-genitive, in which the righteousness “given” to the believer (imputation) constitutes the forensic ground of justification.<sup>18</sup>

Second, vv. 25–26 are read as a subjective-genitive, in which the double ἔνδειξις (“demonstration”) performs the public vindication of that forensic ground. This shows that imputation and divine demonstration are not competing interpretations but contextually differentiated functions within the same argument.

Third, regarding πίστις Ἰησοῦ / ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ, this study adopts a role-complementarity model:<sup>19</sup> the faithfulness of Jesus (subjective genitive) functions as the forensic ground, whereas faith in Jesus (objective genitive; διὰ/ἐκ πίστεως) functions as the means by which incorporation occurs.

When these elements are arranged within a canonical grid of imputation (ground)<sup>20</sup> → transfer/union (means)<sup>21</sup> → dwelling/temple formation (marker/result)<sup>22</sup>, the communal and covenantal

18 Contextual complementarity is an explanatory term used in this study to describe how the two readings of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ within Romans 3:21–26 function together rather than in competition. Reading δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ in vv. 21–22 as a source-genitive (bestowed/imputed righteousness) and τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ in vv. 25–26 as a subjective-genitive (the public demonstration of God’s own righteousness) both draws on established trajectories in major commentary traditions. The repeated double purpose clause with ἔνδειξις—εἰς/πρὸς [τὴν] ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ—functions as the hinge that binds these readings into a complementary whole: the “bestowed/imputed righteousness” of vv. 21–22 (ground) is forensically manifested “now” (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ) through the public ἔνδειξις of vv. 25–26. The two readings are not antithetical but coordinated by sequence and function.

19 Role (tier) complementarity acknowledges that the genitival construction πίστις + genitive permits a legitimate hermeneutical duality in which both genitives may coexist within the same paragraph but at different functional levels (ground vs. means). This is not a matter of alternating readings (“this verse subjective, that verse objective”) but of recognizing layered functions within Paul’s argument.

- Subjective genitive (πίστις Ἰησοῦ = the faithfulness of Jesus) → forensic ground
- Objective genitive (ἐκ/διὰ πίστεως = faith in Jesus) → means of incorporation/union

20 Imputation and transfer designate two distinct yet closely connected dimensions in this study. Imputation refers to a juridical change of status in the God–human relationship—the transition from condemnation to justification—corresponding to the bestowal of God’s righteousness in Romans 3:21–26 and grounded in the forensic legitimacy established by the double ἔνδειξις. Transfer, by contrast, denotes the actual relocation of one’s sphere of belonging and dominion on the basis of that forensic declaration: “from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God” (Acts 26:18) or being “transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the Son” (Col 1:13). Imputation answers the question, “Who is legally declared righteous?” whereas transfer answers the question, “To which realm or governing order does the justified person now belong?” The two are distinguishable but inseparably ordered.

21 The category transfer/union is not an innovation of this paper but a canonical reconfiguration of the long-standing participation-in-Christ trajectory in Pauline theology. Scholars such as James D. G. Dunn and Richard B. Gaffin Jr. have developed robust accounts of “union with Christ” as a central soteriological structure—see Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), and Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1987). This study situates that participatory structure within the legal framework of Romans 3:21–26, reuniting the forensic ground (imputation) with the narrative mode of incorporation (transfer/union).

22 The dwelling–temple motif constitutes a major structural element in Pauline theology and the New Testament canon, and has been extensively developed in modern scholarship. Gordon D. Fee, in *God’s Empowering Presence* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), offers a comprehensive account of how the indwelling Spirit forms the New Testament community into the new temple of God (e.g., Eph 2:19–22; 1 Cor 3:16–17). G. K. Beale, in *The Temple and the Church’s Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), argues for a canonical pattern in which the temple theme unfolds across creation, Exodus, the Jerusalem temple, Christ, the church, and the new creation, demonstrating that the church becomes God’s eschatological temple through the Spirit’s indwelling presence.

emphases of the New Perspective are preserved, yet the full forensic weight of the double ἐνδειξις in vv. 25–26 is also maintained.

Furthermore, the category of “dwelling/temple” provides a concrete explanatory structure for what Wright describes as the mediation between present justification and future justification through life “in the Spirit.”<sup>23</sup> Within the triadic sequence of imputation–union–dwelling, the Spirit-formed ecclesial existence functions as the temporal and communal arena in which this present–future relationship is enacted.

## II. Foreshadowing in Romans and Canonical–Narrative Theological Literacy

To read 3:21–26 without error, a minimal toolkit is: (1) accurately recover the foreshadowing that Romans itself supplies, (2) read alongside the canonical texts the passage evokes, and (3) verify the conclusions by “fruit.” The key interpretive tool here is hermeneutical intertextuality.<sup>24</sup> This provides a framework for explaining how Paul, even without explicit quotation, shapes his argument through the internal interpretation of Israel’s Scriptures. We adopt Moyise’s taxonomy (quotation/allusion/echo; narrative intertext; hermeneutical intertext) as our working criteria.<sup>25</sup> Timothy W. Berkley’s analysis of Romans 2:17–29 shows Paul redefining the covenant sign (circumcision) as inward transformation (circumcision of the heart) against the background of Genesis 17, Deuteronomy 28–30, Jeremiah 7 and 9, and Ezekiel 36.<sup>26</sup> The same intrinsic, canonical mode of interpretation operates in Romans 3:21–26.

### 1. Foreshadowing in Romans (1:1–3:20):

#### Prologue · Thesis (1:16–17) · Universal Guilt (All Under Sin)

##### 1) Prologue: Calling and Gospel (1:1–7)

Romans defines the gospel as “what God promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures concerning his Son” (Rom 1:1–2). The gospel is therefore not a novelty that appears

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The “dwelling/temple (sign)” in this study aligns with and builds upon these canonical and New Testament theological treatments of the temple motif.

23 N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), Book II, Part III, ch. 10, “Election Reworked around the Spirit,” pp. 915–923, 939–941.

24 “Hermeneutical intertextuality” and “canonical–narrative literacy” are not employed here as merely biblical–theological techniques but as concepts grounded in the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer and Ricoeur. They function as a framework for interpreting Paul’s implicit use of the Old Testament within the interaction of (a) the horizon of the text and of the reader, (b) the narrative world generated by the canon, and (c) the hermeneutic circle that operates between text, canon, and reader. A full philosophical exposition of these categories lies beyond the scope of this article; the present study limits itself to showing how hermeneutical intertextuality and canonical–narrative literacy inform the analysis of Romans 3:21–26.

25 Steve Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies: A Review,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 23, no. 2 (2002): 419–428.

26 Timothy W. Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant to Circumcision of the Heart: Pauline Intertextual Exegesis in Romans 2:17–29* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 151–155.

*ex nihilo* in the New Testament, but the fulfillment of canonical promise centered on the Messiah descended from David and declared Son of God in power by resurrection (Rom 1:3–4). Already within the phrase "through the prophets" lies the foreshadowing of Ezekiel 34—"I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep... I will set over them my servant David" (Ezek 34:11–16, 23–24; 37:24; Mic 5:2–4). When "I will set my servant David over them" meets Romans 1:3 ("descended from David"), the opening of Romans is already invoking a canonical thread of messianic shepherd–kingship. Thus the gospel in Romans is not merely "individual conversion" but the fulfillment of the shepherd–king promise, namely the advent of God’s rule in Christ.<sup>27</sup>

## 2) Theme: The Righteousness of God and Faith (Rom 1:16–17)

Romans 1:17 invokes “the righteousness of God” through its citation of Habakkuk 2:4. The context of Habakkuk 1–2 is marked by a lament over the collapse of justice—“Why do you, O LORD, remain silent when the wicked swallow up those more righteous than they?” (Hab 1:13)—and by an apocalyptic tension that awaits “the appointed time” (Hab 2:3). Within this setting, the declaration that “the righteous shall live by his faith/faithfulness” (Hab 2:4) addresses not merely individual piety but the deeper theodical question of how God’s righteousness is sustained and enacted amid judgment delayed and justice suspended. Habakkuk’s concern is thus fundamentally covenantal and judicial: how can God remain righteous while injustice appears to prevail?

Paul takes up this Habakkukian question in Romans 3:21–26 through two decisive keywords: “now” (νυνὶ δέ) and ἔνδειξις, (“demonstration”). The adverb “now” marks a decisive transition from the universal indictment of Romans 1:18–3:20 to the moment in which God’s righteousness intervenes concretely within history. ἔνδειξις, in turn, designates God’s public and forensic demonstration of his righteousness in the blood of Christ (Rom 3:25–26), thereby showing that the earlier “passing over” (πάρεσις) of sins was grounded not in moral indifference but in divine forbearance (ἀνοχή). What Habakkuk anticipated as the revelation of righteousness at the “appointed time” thus reaches its climax in Romans, where God’s righteousness is revealed (ἀποκαλύπτεται, Rom 1:17), manifested (πεφανέρωται, Rom 3:21), and finally publicly demonstrated (ἔνδειξις, Rom 3:25–26).<sup>28</sup>

At this climactic point, the righteousness of God is no longer an abstract principle but a reality that generates a community in which justice is enacted by those who have been justified (Rom 5:1–11; 8:4). Moreover, the truth of worship and sacrifice, together with the practice of righteousness, is given concrete form within the temple motif, as believers are incorporated into Christ and built together as the dwelling place of the Spirit (Eph 2:19–22). Accordingly, Paul’s appeal to Habakkuk in Romans 1:17 functions not as a slogan detached from its prophetic context, but as the canonical starting point for a narrative in which God’s righteousness—one that does not bypass justice—is revealed in Christ and

<sup>27</sup> Dong-Soo Kim, *Romans Commentary*, (Daejeon: Eldoron, 2013), 47–49.

<sup>28</sup> • Ἀποκαλύπτεται → lemma ἀποκαλύπτω, "to reveal."

• Πεφανέρωται → lemma φανερόω, "to make manifest."

• ἔνδειξις → lemma ἐνδεικνύω, "demonstration/proof."

embodied in a covenant community shaped by union and indwelling.

### 3) Universal Guilt (1:18–3:20)<sup>29</sup>

This section places all humanity, belonging to the realm of unrighteousness, before the divine tribunal. Its core claims are twofold: (a) natural revelation discloses God's existence and divine attributes (Rom 1:19–20), but it does not provide a salvific pathway; and (b) nevertheless, humans suppress the truth (Rom 1:18) and exchange God's glory (Rom 1:23), thereby surrendering themselves to the existential condition of "shadow"—that is, life under the dominion of darkness and Satan. In light of the hermeneutical intertextuality with Acts 26:18, this condition is rightly read within the same transfer-of-realm framework.

Romans 2:6–10 sets forth the principle of "repayment according to what one has done," clarifying the standard of God's justice (Rom 2:6–7, 10). This is not a claim of salvation by works. Rather, the declaration in 2:13—"the doers of the law will be justified"—functions as a diagnostic statement showing that to become people who actually do justice requires circumcision of the heart (Rom 2:28–29; Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 31:31–34; Ezek 36:26–27). External markers (hearing/possessing the law) are insufficient; they expose the lack of inner transformation.

Within this frame, Romans 3:9–20 delivers the final verdict of universal guilt—"all are under sin... none is righteous"—and confirms that even those entrusted with the oracles (Rom 3:2) have no advantage before God (Rom 2:11; 3:22b). In sum, Romans lays down as a hermeneutical premise for 3:26 both the universality of human guilt and the universality of the gospel.<sup>30</sup> In other words, if deeds befitting righteousness (justice) are to emerge, a lawful transfer and union grounded in Christ's faithfulness and in the public demonstration of his blood (Rom 3:25–26) is necessary (Acts 26:18; Rom 6), and the result appears as the practice of justice (Rom 8:4).

## 2. Canonical–Narrative Integration: Exod 19:4–6 · Acts 26:18 · Eph 2:19–22

Redemption in v. 24 (ἀπολύτρωσις) summons Exodus 19:4–6 and is canonically linked forward to Acts 26:18. Romans 6 then depicts the dismantling of the old existence through σὺν-union vocabulary ("co-crucified," Rom 6:6; "co-buried," Rom 6:4), while Romans 11 portrays incorporation into a new identity by the grafting principle (ἐγκεντρίζω). Thus "justification by faith" does not rupture other passages; rather, it unfolds as an ontological transformation through union. Accordingly, Rom 3:21–26

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<sup>29</sup> This section's "universal guilt" is not a mere statement of collective psychological guilt but a declaration of dominion: "all are under sin" (Rom 3:9). Its outcome is forensic liability, namely that "the whole world becomes accountable to God" (Rom 3:19). The condition of those who "sit in darkness" (Isa 9:2; Ps 107:10; Luke 1:79)—an existence under the authority of darkness and Satan (Acts 26:18; Col 1:13; Eph 2:1–3)—is precisely what generates forensic guilt. Thus the movement from realm (ontological condition) → courtroom (forensic responsibility) is not a contrast but a cause-and-effect linkage.

<sup>30</sup> Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1988), PDF p.35, "Universal Sinfulness—Proof from Scripture, 3:9–20."

should be read along the canonical axis “Exod 19:4–6 → Acts 26:18 → Eph 2:19–22.”

## 1) Exodus/Temple Foreshadowing

Redemption means release from slave status into the freedom of a liberated person. This recalls the pattern of Exodus 19:4–6—first liberation (“borne on eagles’ wings”), then covenant made with those now free. Hence the remission of sins precedes becoming the covenant people. The ἔνδειξις (3:25–26) is not a reversion to the repetitive cult of Leviticus 16, but the covenant’s forensic basis established once for all by the blood of Christ. This is precisely the “now” (νυνὶ δέ) transition. Therefore 3:21–26 does not return to an “animal-sacrifice cultic frame,” but proclaims the outset of existence-change (transfer/union) that has occurred in Christ’s realm. The declaration addresses the free, and the covenant is made with the free. Thus “faith” is not a substitute ritual for animal sacrifice; it is the conduit of union that trusts and receives Christ’s once-for-all atonement and resurrection, opening into a life that does justice (Acts 26:18; Rom 6).

## 2) Union / Dwelling Fulfillment

The people who will enter the new temple of the new heavens and new earth that Jesus will consummate (Rev 21–22) must be saints from whom rebellion has been ontologically removed. This is why Paul speaks of dwelling-temple construction (Eph 2:19–22; 3:6).<sup>31</sup> This fulfillment unfolds in the sequence “imputation/forensic → transfer/union (application) → dwelling/temple (result).”

① Imputation (forensic ground): The ἔνδειξις of Romans 3:25–26 manifests God’s righteousness “now” (νυνὶ δέ), establishing forensic legitimacy; this functions as the doorway into Christ’s realm.

② Transfer/union (application): Upon this forensic ground, the forgiveness–transfer schema of Acts 26:18 is applied. Romans 6 describes the dismantling of the old existence through σύν-union vocabulary—“co-crucified” and “co-buried”—while Ephesians 2:5–6 testifies to the inauguration of new life through being “made alive with” and “raised with” Christ.<sup>32</sup> Romans 11 then portrays incorporation into a new identity through the principle of grafting (ἐγκεντρίζω).

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31 Young-Chool Oh, *Angels, Satan, and Those Who Sit in the Shadow: A Biblical-Theological Narrative of Ontological Rebellion and Restoration* (Amazon, 2025). 453–454.

32 Core expressions:

- Co-crucified, συνεσταυρώθη (Rom 6:6) — lemma συσταυρόω.
- Co-buried, συνετάφημεν (Rom 6:4) — lemma συνθάπτω.

Romans uses compound verbs for “co-crucified” (6:6) and “co-buried” (6:4), but for “co-died” it employs σύν + dative (ἀπεθάνομεν σὺν Χριστῷ, 6:8) rather than a compound verb. 2 Timothy 2:11, however, uses the compound συναποθνήσκω. This study reads the sequence co-crucifixion → co-death → co-burial as a narrative-theological alignment that marks the substantive dismantling of the old self.

- Made alive together, συνεζωοποίησεν (Eph 2:5) — lemma συζωοποιέω.
- Raised together, συνήγειρεν (Eph 2:6a) — lemma συνεγείρω.

③ Dwelling/temple (result): Those who have been made alive with Christ stand upon the foundation of the gospel (Eph 2:20) and, through the σύν-series of Ephesians 2:19–22—“fellow-citizens,” “built together”—culminating in becoming a dwelling for the Spirit (κατοικητήριον, Eph 2:22).<sup>33</sup> Only those who are being built as the Spirit’s dwelling on earth will be clothed with the heavenly dwelling (οἰκητήριον, 2 Cor 5:2).

④ The Nature of Works—Fruits of Grace, Not Merits: This "doing" is not merit. For Paul, acts that include the σύν motif are not the cause of salvation but the response of a being re-constituted by grace (Eph 2:5–10). The New-Jerusalem temple community consists of those re-created by grace—saints from whom rebellion has been removed—and temple construction emerges as both the necessary pathway into the eschatological temple and the arena in which grace is realized. Thus Israel’s **מִשְׁפַּח-הַבְּרִית** (covenantal justice and righteousness) is actualized within the community as dwelling-temple construction, grounded in forensic imputation and enacted through union (Rom 8:4; 3:31; Eph 2:22).<sup>34</sup> This trajectory begins with the forensic resolution of Romans 3:21–26, expands through the union–liberation–Spirit-indwelling of Romans 6–8, and reaches its corporate “dwelling” fulfillment in the worship and communal order of Romans 12–15. This constitutes what this study calls the basic grid for “reading Romans with canonical-narrative literacy.”<sup>35</sup>

### 3. Considerations for Canonical–Narrative Theological Literacy

By "canonical–narrative theological literacy" I mean the capacity to locate a given pericope (e.g., Rom 3:21–26) within the Bible’s recurring patterns and core motifs—here, Exodus liberation → covenant with a free people, union with Christ (σύν), and temple/dwelling—and to read it in that frame.<sup>36</sup> Within

33 • Built upon (the foundation), ἐποικοδομηθέντες (Eph 2:20) — lemma ἐποικοδομέω.

• Συμπολιται (Eph 2:19) is more than "fellow citizens." The σύν- prefix marks covenantal incorporation and shared polity; thus a fuller sense is "co-citizens incorporated into God’s covenant polity." — lemma: συμπολίτης.

• You are being built together, συνοικοδομεῖσθε (Eph 2:22) — lemma συνοικοδομέω. This sequential presentation is a conceptual aid for clarity, not a claim of strict temporal order. For the dwelling motif in Ephesians, see Young-Chool Oh, *Angels, Satan, and Those Who Sit in the Shadow: A Biblical-Theological Narrative of Ontological Rebellion and Restoration* Ch. 7.

34 The word **מִשְׁפַּח-הַבְּרִית** marks the covenant community’s public order (Gen 18:19; Isa 1:27) and, in the New Testament, is realized within the Spirit’s dwelling so that "the righteous requirement of the law" is fulfilled in us (Rom 8:4; Eph 2:22). Isa 32:16–18 paradigmatically couples "justice–righteousness" with a "peaceful habitation / secure dwellings."

35 The New Perspective reads "the righteousness of God" as God’s covenant faithfulness (a subjective genitive), emphasizing the continuity of the Old Testament mishpat–tsedaqah (justice–righteousness) within the New Testament community’s structures of justice and relational order. This study selectively receives that insight but situates it within a canonical sequence of imputation → transfer/union → dwelling/temple, thereby providing a concrete theological framework for explaining how that divine justice is realized in the Spirit’s dwelling-building (Eph 2:19–22; Rom 8:4, 9–11).

36 Theological literacy denotes the ability to read Scripture not as mere information or moral rules but with attention to structure, symbol, narrative, and redemptive-historical flow. Young-Chool Oh, *Re-reading the Parable of the Good Samaritan through Theological Literacy: A Hermeneutics of Image* (Zenodo, 2025),

this lens, Exodus 19:4–6 provides the liberation → covenant pattern, Acts 26:18 supplies the pardon → domain-transfer axis, and Ephesians 2:19–22 offers the frame of dwelling construction "in Christ."<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, Romans 3:21–26 forms the axis imputation (ground) → transfer/union (application) → dwelling/temple (result). The point is a literacy that refuses to isolate the passage but reads it as a hub in the Bible's foreshadowing and fulfillment. The upshot is a complementary binding: imputation = ground, transfer/union = application, dwelling/temple = result.

### 1) Unit Structure and Rhetoric (The Flow of Rom 3:21–26)

The passage unfolds along three axes: a manifestation of the righteousness (21–22a) → the scope of application (22b–24) → means and purpose (25–26).

① Manifestation of the righteousness (21–22a): Here, "the righteousness of God" is the righteousness that has been "witnessed by the Law and the Prophets" (μαρτυρουμένη),<sup>38</sup> that is, the grace-gift already foreshadowed and guaranteed throughout the canon. Paul's expression "now" (νυνὶ δέ) signals, first, a logical transition from the accusatory discourse of Romans 1:18–3:20 to the declaration of resolution in 3:21, and second, a redemptive-historical contrast between the former era shaped by the Law and the new era inaugurated by the Christ-event. C. K. Barrett acknowledges both dimensions, and the same interpretive tendency can be observed in Dunn, Fitzmyer, and others.<sup>39</sup> Thus, this "revealed righteousness" is not a private religious experience but a marker of the dawn of a new age—functioning as God's public answer to Habakkuk's lament in chapters 1–2 ("Why do you remain silent while injustice prevails?").

② Scope of application (22b–24): The statement "there is no distinction" (Rom 3:22b) is not a generic humanitarian claim but a juridical assertion that God's gift of righteousness is applied without discrimination. Three considerations underlie this.

3, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17059454>; Esther L. Meek, "Longing to Know and the Complexities of Knowing God," *Tradition and Discovery* 31.3 (2005): 29–44.

37 The focus of Ephesians 2:19–22 is less an institutional label ("the church") than the process by which believers, in συν- union, are "being built together" in the Spirit into God's dwelling (κατοικητήριον, 2:22). Thus the movement from the ἰλαστήριον (mercy-seat) of Rom 3:25 to Christ signals, on the forensic ground supplied by imputed righteousness, the concrete re-constitution of persons—those who "sit in the shadow"—into a Spirit-dwelling through the σύν-series of Eph 2 (fellow-citizens → being built together). In short: imputation (forensic ground) → transfer/union (application) → dwelling/temple (realization), with the final public marker being that believers become the Spirit's dwelling.

38 Spectrum of readings on "the righteousness of God": C. E. B. Cranfield reads it as God's saving action/manifestation that confers a righteous status. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*, 18–24; 68–77; Ernst Käsemann emphasizes its eschatological/public manifestation. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 91–101; Schreiner binds forensic and transformative dimensions under "saving righteousness." Schreiner, *Romans*, III. A. "God's Righteousness in the Death of Jesus (3:21–26)."; I. "The Gospel as the Revelation of God's Righteousness (Rom 1:1–17)."

39 Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 72–73 (on νυνὶ δέ as both logical transition and salvation-historical "now"); Dunn, *Romans* 1–8, 330–359; Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB 33), 343–44.

First, the universality of sin: even though the Jew has been “entrusted with the oracles of God” (Rom 3:2), the Jew is not exempt from the verdict that “all are under sin” (Rom 3:9). Gentiles likewise remain under sin’s dominion (1:18–32). Second, the gratuity of righteousness: justification is given “freely by his grace” (δωρεάν, 3:24), grounded in the “redemption” (ἀπολύτρωσις) that is in Christ Jesus. Because it rests on no human merit, there is no basis for differential application. This term “redemption” evokes the Exodus motif, in which liberation precedes and grounds covenant (Exod 19:4–6). Third, divine initiative: the provision of righteousness is not the result of human ascent but God’s own initiating action. The structure of the clause—“through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe” (3:22b)—presupposes a universally opened invitation originating on God’s side.

Thus the declaration “there is no distinction” reflects both the universality of sin (3:9–20) and the universality of gospel application (3:22b–24), functioning as a precise juridical and redemptive-historical affirmation.

③ Means and purpose (25–26): God publicly set forth Christ Jesus as ἱλαστήριον—whether understood as ‘mercy seat’ or ‘atoning sacrifice’—and he explains the purpose of this act by repeating the clause ‘for/to the demonstration of his righteousness’ (εἰς/πρὸς [τὴν] ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ, 3:25–26). In other words, God publicly displays that he is “both righteous and the one who justifies the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). The ἱλαστήριον is the point at which God’s justice and his mercy toward sinners meet; and by activating the mercy-seat/temple motif, it opens naturally into the dwelling-temple construction of Ephesians 2:19–22.<sup>40</sup>

④ Noteworthy: The forensic chain “manifested → attested → justified → publicly set forth → demonstrated” interlocks with the exodus/temple lexemes (ἀπολύτρωσις, ἱλαστήριον), inviting us to read the paragraph through two coordinated lenses: forensic legitimacy and liberation–presence (Exodus → temple).

## 2) Key lexemes and grammatical issues

### ① Δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ (the righteousness of God)

Within 3:21–26, δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ operates on two coordinated layers with a functional division of

<sup>40</sup> In the LXX, ἱλαστήριον commonly renders Hebrew כַּפֶּרֶת, the gold cover of the ark, especially in Exod 25:17–22; 37:6–9; Lev 16; Num 7:89. In the NT it occurs at Romans 3:25 and Hebrews 9:5. Korean Bibles typically translate Exodus 25:17 as “속죄소(판),” while the Chinese 和合本 uses “施恩座” (“mercy seat”). Korean scholarship likewise employs “시은좌” as a technical term in tabernacle/temple theology. Taking the place sense, Romans 3:25 declares that the locus where presence and atonement meet is fulfilled in Christ, and this temple motif naturally extends to Ephesians 2:19–22’s κατοικητήριον (God’s dwelling). At the same time, a “sacrifice/propitiation” reading persists in translation and commentary traditions (e.g., Moo, NICNT, favors “sacrifice of atonement” while also discussing the mercy-seat option). Cranfield (ICC), Dunn (WBC), and Beale examine and support the mercy-seat reading. Complementarily, Hebrews 9–10 allows Christ to be understood as the union of priest–victim–place, so “victim” (means) and “place/seat” (locus) are not mutually exclusive.

labor. First, as a subjective genitive (25–26): as the double purpose construction signals—“εις/πρὸς [τὴν] ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ” (“for/to the demonstration of his righteousness”)—δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ denotes God’s own public, forensic self-manifestation/vindication. That is, God’s righteous character and judicial rectitude are publicly proved through the blood of Christ, so that He is shown to be “δίκαιον καὶ δικαιοῦντα” (3:26).

Second, as a source (origin) genitive (21–22): the statement that righteousness “comes upon all who believe” points to a righteousness given from God—the imputed, forensic gift. The coupling of πεφανέρωται (“has been manifested”) with “being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets” (3:21) underwrites this bestowed righteousness as a canonically attested gift of grace.

Thus, in Romans 3:21–26, “the bestowal/imputation of God’s righteousness” (vv. 21–22) and “the demonstration of God’s righteousness” (vv. 25–26) are not competing interpretations but coordinated functions within the same textual architecture. Within the passage, bestowal (vv. 21–22) establishes the gift-character and forensic ground of imputed righteousness, whereas demonstration (vv. 25–26) provides its public juridical vindication. Upon this dual structure, the subsequent narrative movement of transfer/union and dwelling/temple formation (Rom 6; Eph 2) unfolds naturally.

In short, the source genitive highlights the gifted and forensic ground of imputation, while the subjective genitive highlights God’s juridical self-vindication; together, these two layers form an integrated grid of “forensic → union → dwelling.”

② Ἐνδειξις (Rom 3:25–26)

#### • Meaning and syntax

In vv. 25–26 Paul deliberately employs two purpose clauses with ἔνδειξις (εις/πρὸς [τὴν] ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ, “for the demonstration of his righteousness”), thereby declaring with double focus the public and forensic manifestation of God’s righteousness. God put forward Christ Jesus as ἰλαστήριον (v. 25), and the stated purpose of this act is “the demonstration of his righteousness” (vv. 25–26). The construction εις/πρὸς + ἔνδειξις does not function as mere informational explanation; rather, it denotes a public act of demonstration carrying juridical force.

#### • Narrative-theological role

In this way, ἔνδειξις addresses the theodical and forensic problem posed in Romans 1:18–3:20, resolving it through the public manifestation of God’s righteousness at the “now-time” (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ) highlighted in 3:26. It presupposes that the “passing over” of former sins (πάρεσις) rested on God’s “forbearance” (ἀνοχή), and it publicly and juridically demonstrates—“now” (ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ), in Christ’s blood (ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι)—that such forbearance was not a toleration of injustice (Rom 3:25–26). In this way, God is revealed as “righteous and the one who justifies” (3:26).

Hence ἔνδειξις provides:

- a) a forensic resolution to the theodicy question (Was God fair in “passing over” sins in the past?),
- b) the soteriological ground explaining how God can justify the ungodly.

### • Temple–court hinge

Through ἰλαστήριον and προέθετο ("publicly set forth"), ἔνδειξις becomes the key junction where temple imagery and courtroom imagery interlock. The cultic register (mercy-seat) is joined to public juridical demonstration (ἔνδειξις): not repeated animal sacrifice, but Christ's once-for-all blood as the public and final ground.

### • Portal from imputation → transfer → dwelling

What ἔνδειξις establishes is not an emotional "appeasement" but the legal legitimacy of imputation. Because God has publicly demonstrated his own righteousness, imputation is not an arbitrary declaration but one grounded in forensic justification (the ground of imputation). On the basis of this ground, the forgiveness–transfer of dominion (Acts 26:18) is juridically warranted—its mode of application being union (σὺν). Ultimately, this process reaches its visible outcome in the construction of God's dwelling (Eph 2:19–22).

### • Downstream effects (immediate entailments)

- a) Boasting excluded (3:27): the public-demonstration/imputation structure eliminates human merit.
- b) Jew/Gentile unity (3:29–30): the universality of the forensic ground strengthens the "no distinction" claim.
- c) Law upheld (3:31): "faith" does not abolish the Law but aligns it toward fulfillment (Rom 8:4—the righteous requirement realized).

In sum, ἔνδειξις functions as a hinge that binds together the subjective genitive of the righteousness of God (God's own righteousness) and the source genitive (the imputed righteousness bestowed upon believers).<sup>41</sup> Here God is publicly vindicated as "righteous and the justifier" (3:26), and that vindication functions as the threshold that renders the canonical progression—imputation → transfer → dwelling—both legitimate and necessary in its sequence.

### 3) Summary and Implications: the significance of the forensic–union–dwelling triad

Romans 3:21–26, within a forensic frame (the public vindication of God's righteousness), summons the Exodus/Temple motifs—ἀπολύτρωσις and ἰλαστήριον—and thereby opens a canonical corridor that runs imputation (ground) → transfer/union (process) → dwelling/temple (result). Accordingly, the declaration that "God justifies the one who has faith in Jesus" entails not merely amnesty but also lawful domain-transfer and temple-construction. This study therefore construes the imputation of righteousness as the judicial basis for legitimate transfer of realm, union as the mode of its application,

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<sup>41</sup> By "hinge," this study means the central connective axis by which these two interpretive levels—God's own righteousness (subjective genitive) and the righteousness granted to believers (source genitive)—do not operate independently but are coherently integrated into a single forensic–soteriological structure through ἔνδειξις. Moreover, this hinge also serves as a canonical point of connection that links Exodus 19:4–6, Acts 26:18, and Ephesians 2:19–22 into a unified redemptive-narrative axis.

and dwelling-construction as its public/resultant marker. The imputation–union–dwelling triad coheres canonically with Exodus 19:4–6 (liberation precedes covenant), Acts 26:18 (amnesty → transfer), and Ephesians 2:19–22 (built on the foundation → fellow-citizens → being built together → κατοικητήριον).

#### **4. "Judging By Their Fruits" and Eternal Life — a tool for validating the conclusion**

Romans 3:21–26 declares that a person is justified by faith. Yet an interpretation confined solely to the immediate textual unit (Rom 3:21–26) must not undermine the broader biblical testimony concerning eternal life—that is, life belonging to God’s own realm. Given that Scripture bears witness through organic inspiration, the apocalyptic vision of Habakkuk and the converging testimonies of Luke, Paul, and Matthew in the Gospels and Epistles must be read in canonical coherence.

##### **1) Canonical calibration 1 — Luke on eternal life (Luke 10:25–37; 18:18–30)**

Luke shows that eternal life belongs to God’s domain. It is not a wage for human deeds but a gift of grace to those whose names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20) and who receive divine revelation (Luke 10:21–24). Thus the forensic declaration received by faith (amnesty/justification) is then made visible in life through the relational application of transfer and union.<sup>42</sup>

##### **2) Canonical calibration 2 — "the law of the Spirit of life" (Rom 8:2)**

The statement that “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Rom 8:2) should not be read as a description of the believer’s psychological state, but as a declaration concerning a mode of existence constituted by the indwelling presence of the Spirit—that is, a dwelling. The forensic declaration of justification (Rom 3:21–26) effects a juridically legitimate transfer of dominion (Acts 26:18), and for those who are incorporated through σύν-union, the indwelling of the Spirit (Rom 8:9–11) is realized as the construction of God’s dwelling (Eph 2:19–22; κατοικητήριον). Accordingly, faith is not a cultic substitute but the means by which the forensic declaration is received and believers are transferred into the realm of Christ (Eph 1:13–14). Eternal life is thus not merely an inward experience but becomes visible where an ontological transformation takes place through the Spirit’s indwelling. In this context, fruit—namely, the fulfillment of righteousness (Rom 8:4)—is not a matter of merit, but the outcome that emerges as believers are being built into a dwelling for God.

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<sup>42</sup> Young-Chool Oh, *The Contextual Chiasmic Structure and the Theological Meaning of Eternal Life: A Study on Luke 9:51–11:13* (Zenodo, 2025), 21, <https://zenodo.org/records/15313616>.

### 3) Canonical calibration 3 — The principle of grafting (Rom 11:16–24)

Some argue that Paul was ignorant of ancient horticultural practice; that reading misses the point of the passage. The focus is not agronomic technique but the canonical pattern of forensic imputation → union → fruit. Grafting (ἐγκεντρίζω) images the lawful transfer (realm admission by judicial declaration) indicated by Romans 3:21–26 and Acts 26:18. The sap from the root is the "Spirit of life" (Rom 8:2), effecting ontological transformation in those who are in union (σὺν). When this transformation is verified by fruit (Rom 8:4; Matt 7:16–20), Paul's grafting metaphor coheres with its intended telos: the construction of God's dwelling (Eph 2:19–22).

Moreover, the metaphor acknowledges the ordinary natural rule: a branch bears fruit in accordance with its own nature ("a wild branch produces wild fruit"). Paul employs this very rule to teach that even when a branch is grafted into Christ's realm, true olive-tree fruit cannot emerge unless ontological transformation takes place through union and the indwelling Spirit.<sup>43</sup> Therefore "justified by faith" is not a norm-less indulgence but the way God's righteousness and justice appear together within the canonical order imputation (ground) → transfer/union (application) → dwelling/construction (result) (Rom 3:31; 8:4).

### 4) Habakkuk's justice flows into "fruit"

We often judge a person "righteous" after a few right actions. Scripture's order is being first, doing second. When an ontological transformation to a righteous existence occurs, righteous action (fruit) follows. The lament over justice in Habakkuk 1–2 is re-situated by Jesus's criterion "you will know them by their fruits" (Matt 7:16–20). Fruit is not merit but the outcome of union (Rom 8:4), a sign that realm-transfer (Acts 26:18) has in fact occurred. In other words, even if one has entered Christ's realm by a judicial declaration, "by their fruits" does not teach a deeds-for-wages causal chain but the Spirit-wrought ontological change (Rom 8:2). Within the canonical order imputation → transfer/union → dwelling/fruit, the Old Testament צדקה–משפט (covenantal justice and righteousness) become visible through the Spirit's indwelling (Rom 8:4; Eph 2:22). This is not rupture but transposition—one and the same covenantal order appearing in the New Testament in the language of dwelling construction.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> By ordinary practice fruit is determined by the branch's nature, so Paul's "wild → cultivated" graft is atypical in horticulture. Some early interpreters therefore treated Paul's *παρὰ φύσιν* ("against nature," Rom 11:24) as technical naiveté, but that misreads the passage's redemptive-historical intent. Grace does not abolish creation's order; it fulfills it. Paul does not make "justification by faith" an arbitrary favor; he explains it via grafting: those "sitting in darkness" (a wild branch) are transferred and united (ἐγκεντρίζω) to Christ's realm (the holy root), transformed by the Spirit (Rom 8:9–11), and thus bear fruit. This aligns with the dwelling-construction motif of Ephesians 2:19–22: the practice of justice is not a résumé for merit but the fruit naturally produced as God's people are being built (συνοικοδομέω). See Philip F. Esler, "Ancient Oleiculture and Ethnic Differentiation: The Meaning of the Olive-Tree Image in Romans 11," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26/1 (2003): 103–124; J. C. T. Havemann, "Cultivated Olive – Wild Olive: The Olive Tree Metaphor in Romans 11:16–24," *Neotestamentica* 31/1 (1997): 87–106.

<sup>44</sup> In literary/narrative criticism, "transposition" denotes the migration of an existing motif/structure into a new context, altering its form while preserving functional continuity. In biblical theology, transposition is not

In sum, when the forensic imputation of Romans 3:21–26 unfolds through the transfer/union and the Spirit’s indwelling described in Romans 6–8, and finally becomes visible in the dwelling/temple construction and the fruit of righteousness (Rom 8:4) in Ephesians 2:19–22, the gap between “present justification” and “future justification,” as Wright describes it, is mediated by life in the Spirit—that is, by the ongoing process of being built into God’s dwelling. The study’s imputation–union–dwelling grid is therefore an attempt to restate this continuous structure along the canonical–narrative axis of Exodus 19:4–6, Acts 26:18, and Ephesians 2:19–22.

### III. Canonical Integration with Romans’ Foreshadowing

The foreshadowing pattern traced in Romans—forensic declaration → union → dwelling—shows how Paul’s theology unfolds within the Old Testament’s overarching story. This section examines how that pattern is canonically integrated, following the redemptive sequence of Exodus → amnesty/transfer → union → dwelling.

#### 1. Exodus Motif: Liberation precedes covenant (Exod 19:4–6)

The basic order of Exodus is unambiguous. God first brings slaves out, and only then makes covenant with them as free people. In other words, the narrative runs "liberation → covenant → dwelling (inheritance)." The essence of belonging to the covenant is the gift of status and relationship—"I, the LORD, will be your God, and you shall be my people"—and only then comes the land/abode in which to live. As in Ezekiel 16’s nuptial parable, the bridegroom prepares a house for the bride; so Canaan is given.

Within this frame, the "redemption" of verse 24 (Rom 3:24) is not a mere line about "status change," but the doorway grace opens. It is the opening of passage from Egypt (Exod 20:2; canonically, from the power of darkness/Satan, Acts 26:18; Col 1:13) into the sphere of the covenant. Because liberation is not the terminus but the precondition for entering the arena of covenant life, law–statutes–justice necessarily follow (the Sinai pattern of Exod 19–24). Crucially, this order does not end in interior resolve; it is verified in a public dwelling. Land, city gates, sanctuary, Sabbath and festivals, and provisions for the poor serve as communal and liturgical markers of that order. In sum:

- Liberation: gracious deliverance (Rom 3:24).
- Covenant: the granting of relationships and Order (the Exodus 19–24 pattern).
- Dwelling: the visibility of that order in the space where God truly abides (tabernacle/temple; in the New Testament, the Spirit’s dwelling, Eph 2:22).

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abrogation but mode-shift by continuity: the Old Testament’s temple/national-covenant order is "relocated" in the New Testament to the Spirit’s dwelling (κατοικητήριον) in persons and the community. Thus צדקה–משפט is not discontinued but, in Christ, fulfilled as the requirement of the law is accomplished in us (Rom 8:4) and expressed in the language of dwelling construction (Eph 2:22).

Therefore, redemption must not be reduced to a merely forensic declaration; it must be understood upon the canonical progression "liberation → covenant → dwelling."

## 2. Acts 26:18 Motif: Remission (ἄφεσις) and Lawful Transfer

Paul summarizes the commission he received from the Lord as follows: "to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the authority of Satan to God, that they may receive the remission of sins and a share in the inheritance (κληροσ)" (Acts 26:18). Here remission presupposes a change in forensic status and corresponds to liberation (Exodus).<sup>45</sup> By contrast, darkness and the authority of Satan describe an existential condition, and the transfer into Christ's realm denotes a movement between dominion-structures. Thus remission and transfer form conjoint axes that align directly with the liberation–covenant pattern. Moreover, when the double-purpose construction with ἔνδειξις in Romans 3:25–26 publicly manifests the legitimacy of the remission, it simultaneously establishes the lawfulness of the transfer. To summarize:

- Forensic axis: remission of sins—the removal of condemnation.
- Realm axis: transfer—the change of jurisdiction/dominion (darkness → light; Satan → God).

This paper understands the imputation of righteousness as the forensic ground that enables lawful realm-transfer. When God discloses his righteousness by ἔνδειξις (public demonstration/proof), imputation supplies the basis on which pardon and realm-transfer can occur legitimately. Without this ground, remission and transfer would be groundless declarations; conversely, if imputation were affirmed without ensuing transfer, the canonical sequence Exodus → covenant → dwelling would stall at a legal pronouncement and fail to advance. Hence we reject both imputation reduction (absolutizing imputation alone) and imputation exclusion (emphasizing covenant/participation while sidelining imputation). The text must be read within the complementary integration imputation (ground) → transfer/union (process) → dwelling-construction (result).

In sum, imputation is the ground of redemption; transfer is its historical/processual outworking; and the construction of God's dwelling (Eph 2:19–22) is its emblematic/resultant sign. Through imputation, condemnation is removed (forensic); through transfer, an actual relocation occurs from darkness to light and from Satan's authority to God (process); and, finally, the saints are being built together by the Spirit into God's dwelling (κατοικητήριον) (result). Only with this intact chain—imputation (ground) → transfer (process) → construction into the Spirit-indwelt dwelling (result)—does Paul's soteriological frame (forensic–union–dwelling) move toward concrete fulfillment in history and life.

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<sup>45</sup> Ἄφεσις in the LXX is linked to the vocabulary of release/remission of offenses (e.g., Lev 16; Isa 61:1) and, in the New Testament, carries a strongly forensic nuance of removal (e.g., Mark 1:4; Luke 24:47).

### 3. Ephesians 2 Motif: The σὺν-Series and the Building of the Dwelling (Eph 2:5–6, 19–22)

Ephesians does not erase Romans' forensic idiom; it unfolds redemption as the application of union (σὺν-) and the result of constructing God's dwelling (κατοικητήριον). Paul presents the actualization of union—"made alive together / raised together"—and then narrates the movement "built upon the foundation → fellow-citizens → being built together," climaxing in God's dwelling (Eph 2:19–22). Here "dwelling" is not moral improvement but a re-constitution of the person as a site fit for the Spirit's indwelling—the existential/community realization of the forensic declaration in Romans 3. In short, imputation (ground) issues, through transfer/union (application), in dwelling (result).

- Application (Union).

Triple death and the dismantling of the old self—co-crucified (συνεσταυρώθη, Rom 6:6; cf. Gal 2:20), co-died (ἀπεθάνομεν σὺν Χριστῷ, Rom 6:8; cf. 2 Tim 2:11), co-buried (συνετάφημεν, Rom 6:4; cf. Col 2:12) → made alive together (συνεζωοποίησεν, Eph 2:5; cf. Col 2:13) → raised together (συνήγειρεν, Eph 2:6a; cf. Col 2:12; 3:1).

- Result (Construction/Status).

Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20) → becoming fellow citizens (Eph 2:19) → being built together (Eph 2:21–22) → reaching the κατοικητήριον (Eph 2:22, the dwelling place where the Spirit truly resides) → receiving the threefold identity of co-participants, co-bodied, and co-heirs (Eph 3:6)<sup>46</sup> → being clothed with the eschatological fulfillment—the οικητήριον (2 Cor 5:2) → being seated with Christ (συγκαθίζω, Eph 2:6b).<sup>47</sup>

Paul also says we "put on" (ἐπενδύσασθαι) "our dwelling from heaven" (οικητήριον, 2 Cor 5:2). This "putting on" is not a swap but an eschatological overlay: the heavenly dwelling is added upon the already-being-built earthly κατοικητήριον. Therefore, only those prepared as the Spirit's dwelling now will "put on" the heavenly dwelling then. Seen this way, the "justification" of Romans 3 is re-voiced in Ephesians with the language of being and building. Finally, none of this can be reduced to "works." Every stage proceeds with Christ (σὺν-) as the application of union—that is, as the believer's response to grace. Practices severed from Christ remain "works"; obedience in response to the word with Christ is the fruit of grace. Thus statutes, ordinances, and justice are not conditions of salvation but guides/

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46 • Σύμμετοχα — "co-participants / co-partakers."

• Σύσσωμα — "co-bodied; jointly incorporated into the one body."

• Συγκληρονόμοι — "co-heirs / joint-heirs."

47 Although the verb "seated us with Him" (συνεκάθισεν) in Ephesians 2:6 is grammatically an aorist (past) tense, it does not describe the immediate or completed consummation of salvation. Rather, it denotes an already-granted status—an anticipatory enthronement—conferred through union with Christ. Within the New Testament's characteristic already-not yet framework, this is best understood as a positional declaration that guarantees the future, final consummation (cf. Phil 3:20–21; Col 3:1–4).

stepping stones along the path of being built as God's dwelling.

#### 4. Integration of the Three Motifs

In sum, the liberation–covenant pattern of Exodus 19:4–6 is rearticulated in the New Testament as the "forgiveness–transfer" axis of Acts 26:18 and concretized in Ephesians 2 as "union (σὺν) → the construction of the dwelling." Thus "justification by faith" is not a cultic substitute for sacrifice but total reliance on Christ's once-for-all work: imputation (ground) legitimates forgiveness and transfer; union (application) issues in the visible construction of the dwelling of God's Spirit as the result. This reading avoids the false polarization of either "imputation is everything" or "imputation is dispensable," and instead recovers the canonical integration imputation–union–dwelling.

The division of Israel's kingdom was no mere political accident. God tore Solomon's unified kingdom because "statutes and ordinances were abandoned" (1 Kgs 11), showing that the covenantal order (statute–ordinance–justice) is the very order of God's reign.<sup>48</sup> The New Testament transposes this same covenantal order into the language of dwelling–construction—believers, in union with Christ, are "being built together" as the dwelling (κατοικητήριον) where the Spirit abides (Eph 2:19–22).<sup>49</sup> This shift is not abolition but transposition. Statutes, ordinances, and justice are re-positioned in the NT as both the form of building and its energy (the Spirit), realized through obedience within union. This aligns precisely with Jesus' criterion, "You will know them by their fruits" (Matt 7:16–20). The point is not a mechanical cause–effect scheme but transformative being—the construction of a wholly new existence as κατοικητήριον. In other words, we do not accrue merit by "works" (Rom 3–4); rather, walking by the Spirit in union with Christ brings about the fulfillment of the law's just requirement in us (Rom 8:4; Eph 2:10, 22).<sup>50</sup>

"Salvation by faith" means that the blood of animals is superseded by Christ's once-for-all atonement and resurrection; faith is not another ritual but total trust in his work. On the legal ground provided by imputation, forgiveness and domain-transfer occur lawfully (Acts 26:18). Through union, believers are in fact being built in the Spirit into God's dwelling (Eph 2:19–22). Therefore, when the canonical linkage—faith → lawful transfer → construction as Spirit-indwelt persons—is kept clear, Paul's soteriology emerges as a three-axis structure in which forensic (imputation), union, and dwelling operate together as an integrated whole.

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48 That covenantal order is elsewhere captured in the pairing of משפט and צדקה as the public shape of YHWH's rule (e.g., Gen 18:19; Isa 1:27; 32:16–18).

49 Continuity and transposition. The OT's justice-mercy-faithfulness (e.g., Mic 6:8; Prov 21:3) and the NT's dwelling-construction (Eph 2:19–22) differ in expression, not in theology; the NT transposes the covenantal order into the realities of indwelling Spirit and union.

50 If "transfer into Christ" is equated with the completion of salvation, the process of dwelling-construction (συνοικοδομησθε ... εἰς κατοικητήριον, Eph 2:22) is effectively omitted. This study reads the text within the continuous frame forensic/imputation → transfer/union → ecclesial construction of the dwelling → fruit. The Spirit-wrought reality of union yields obedience, and in that obedience the law's righteous requirement is fulfilled (Rom 8:4; Eph 2:10).

## IV. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that reading Romans 3:21–26 through a canonical-narrative theological literacy allows the passage’s original intent to emerge with greater precision rather than distortion. The central claim is that the triadic structure—forensic (imputation) → transfer/union (σὺν) → dwelling/temple construction—is canonically bound to Exodus 19:4–6 (deliverance → covenant), Acts 26:18 (forgiveness → transfer of dominion), and Ephesians 2:19–22 (σὺν-series → κατοικητήριον). Together these form a coherent soteriological sequence of ground → process → outcome.

At this point, the double ἔνδειξις functions as a hinge that binds together the subjective genitive (God’s own righteousness) and the source genitive (the righteousness imputed to believers), publicly demonstrating God to be “righteous and the one who justifies the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom 3:26). This public demonstration propels the canonical movement of imputation → transfer/union → dwelling. In other words, the ἔνδειξις serves (1) within the paragraph as the contextual hinge that unites the two genitive readings, and (2) within the canon as the redemptive–historical hinge that spans Exod 19:4–6, Acts 26:18, and Eph 2:19–22.

The interpretive approach of this study—reading the passage not in isolation but within its canonical and narrative context—yields two major areas of significance.

First, methodological significance. By refusing to reduce the passage to isolated doctrinal fragments and instead tracing its underlying motifs (Exodus–covenant, transfer/union, dwelling/temple, union), this approach clarifies the complementary alignment of imputation = ground, transfer/union = application, and dwelling/temple = result. Consequently, "faith" is not a ritual substitute for sacrifice but the trusting reception of Christ’s once-for-all work and the means of entering His realm (Acts 26:18; Eph 1:13–14). Moreover, the "fruit" (Rom 8:4) is not meritorious achievement but the visible marker that emerges as believers are built into God’s dwelling by the Spirit.

Second, theological and ethical significance. The Old Testament pattern of צדקה–משפט (covenantal justice and righteousness) is not abolished but transposed into the New Testament’s dwelling/temple motif. On the forensic foundation secured by imputation, life "according to the Spirit" within union with Christ actualizes "the righteous requirement of the law" (Rom 8:4), which in turn is embodied as the ontological formation of God’s dwelling (κατοικητήριον, Eph 2:22). The church thus becomes an organic community being built together as the Spirit’s actual place of residence. Ethical obedience, therefore, is not a condition of salvation but the fruit borne by those in whom the Spirit dwells.

In conclusion, the "righteousness of God" in Romans 3:21–26 is the manifestation of covenantal faithfulness that stands upon the forensic demonstration of imputation and unfolds into union and temple construction. This integrated reading transcends both "imputation-only reductionism" and "participation-only approaches," recovering the full threefold structure of forensic–union–dwelling. In the lived reality of Jesus’ teaching ("you will know them by their fruits," Matt 7:16–20) and Paul’s "law of the Spirit of life" (Rom 8:2), forensic justification and embodied justice coalesce in grace. The study thus shows that the forensic ground of imputation is publicly vindicated through ἔνδειξις, and

that this ground becomes concretely realized in transfer/union and in the Spirit-formed construction of God's dwelling. This constitutes the core contribution of the present work.

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