



## The Epistle to the Romans

Lesson Number 10



# RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH

<sup>3:21</sup> But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, <sup>26</sup> to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26<sup>NKJV</sup>)

## INTRODUCTION

### LESSON OUTLINE

- I. RIGHTEOUSNESS APART FROM THE LAW (3:21)
- II. RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH (3:22a)
- III. THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE (3:22b)
- IV. A PROPITIATION SET FORTH (3:25)
- V. R I G H T E O U S N E S S DEMONSTRATED (3:26)

With great power, the Spirit has established the universal guilt of sin. Without the Law, yet with the powerful testimony of both creation and conscience, the Gentile world lived in sin. They failed to seek the Lord as they were appointed

and positioned to do, creating idols, and refusing to be thankful. The Jews also were subjected to the unwavering and consistent testimony of creation. Additionally, they also received the more extensive testimony of the Law. Nature did not identify sin: the Law did. Nature pronounced neither blessing nor cursing: the Law did. Nature presented no intelligent shadows or types that declared a coming Redeemer: the Law did. Yet, the Jews also were dominated by sin, often falling into precisely the same sins as the Gentiles, who had neither Law nor promise. All have sinned!

As if this were not enough, the testimony of God Himself is brought before us. Assessing the totality of humanity with an omniscient eye He concludes, *"There is none righteous, no,*

*not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one"* (3:10-12).

All of this is intended to remove all hope in the flesh. Every person will eventually confront the Creator. Nothing that was resident in Adam can prepare us for that inevitability. Time has confirmed this to be the case. The outlining of moral responsibilities has also proved inadequate for the required preparation. Whatever may be said of the human intellect, it is not equal to this task. However precious the human will may be, it is not capable of making a decision on its own that will enable one to pass Divine scrutiny. Human emotion, upon which so

*The means through which God's righteousness is received is a central doctrine of Scripture, by Given O. Blakely*

much human activity is built, cannot equip us to stand before the Lord of glory. Intellect, will, and emotion are impotent to change our condition. They cannot remove a single transgression, make us clean, or induce a vivifying hope within us. However unpalatable this may be to men, it is nevertheless true. The totality of the Gentile world confirms the condition, as well as the total history of the Jews. **We need a righteousness from God.** We cannot do without it, for we cannot develop one of our own.

### YOU MUST BE BORN AGAIN

This entire section of Scripture is an exposition of Jesus' poignant words, "You *MUST* be born again" (John 3:7). The delineation of the dominance of sin over both Gentile and Jew confirms, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). The fact that "there is none righteous, no not one" substantiates "the flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63).

The entirety of the Adamic order has been repudiated by God. Even the totality of the natural order has been "made subject to vanity," or subjected to mortality (Rom 8:20). Whatever gains its effectiveness from natural resources is powerless to bring a person one inch closer to God. Such things, regardless of their acclaimed superiority, have no effect whatsoever in altering the will, removing sin, or making the conscience pure.

Having said this, I am compelled to observe that a considerable amount of religious expertise relies completely upon natural resources—"the natural man" (1 Cor 2:14). Organization has no power to purge the conscience from dead works. Scholarship cannot enhance fellowship with God. Language expertise cannot liberate the soul from the dominion of sin. The accreditation of the most prestigious university in the world cannot write one's name in heaven. As simplistic as that may appear, the religious structure of our Western culture has managed to obscure the reality of these things.

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It is not necessary for difficult and oppressive circumstances to be the means of recognizing the poverty of the flesh.

The Word of God can convince us that in our flesh "dwells no good thing" (Rom 7:18).

### WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO SAY THIS?

At some point, the heart must be brought to trust in the Word of the Lord—particularly its assessment of the human race. The reason for this is straightforward. **MEN WILL NOT RECEIVE A RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD UNTIL THEY ARE CONVINCED THEY HAVE NONE OF THEIR OWN.**

One of the grievous transgressions of sectarianism is the attempt to codify morality and systematize salvation. Without going into the particulars of this circumstance, it is enough to observe WHY men engage in such efforts. It is because they either do not possess the righteousness of God, or lack the confidence that they do. **An ignorance of the righteousness of God (Rom 10:3) compels the unlearned to seek a righteousness of their own.** This is the mother of legalism, and is a blight upon the body of Christ.

If a fundamental ignorance of the righteousness of God for men did not exist, the passage we are considering would not be necessary. It has been given to us to clarify what the devil has obscured, and to lift us into the realm of blessing.

## RIGHTEOUSNESS APART FROM THE LAW

***3:21* But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.** Having seen the fruitlessness of all human endeavors to become righteous, the Spirit will now reveal to us the Divine initiative. He will show us what the Lord has done about our situation. Its absolute effectiveness and availability will be proclaimed with great spiritual power. Here is something every soul needs to comprehend.

### BUT NOW

Here is a joyful transition from the condemnation of the Law to the good news of the Gospel. The provision of a righteousness from God is not an afterthought, or a Divine reaction to an unexpected turn of events. **Since what is now revealed transcends what was experienced at the first by Adam, it should be evident it was purposed before him.** Things did not begin with Adam, but with Divine purpose.

In His redemptive capacity, Jesus "was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Pet 1:20). He is truly "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev 13:8). That being the case, **Adam was not the ultimate man**, but only "the first man" (1 Cor 15:45,47). Through him, God's "eternal purpose" was initiated upon the earth. That purpose included the predetermination that those foreknown by God would be

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“conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom 8:29). This conformation involved the subject of our text: the “righteousness of God.”

### A Purpose for History

From an earthly perspective, it looked as though history was virtually ungoverned, with no real purpose being served. But this was not the case at all. In the digression of man, there was an increasing confirmation of his fundamental sinfulness. Both time and covenant proved this was true.

### Avoiding Pointless Philosophy

We must zealously avoid developing crystallized philosophies about this matter, or posing questions that are not posed in Scripture. Some, for example, spend endless hours contemplating whether or not God knew man would sin. Based upon speculation, these contemplators then question why God did not stop man from sinning, or if there was a race before man . . . etc., etc. These are all profitless cogitations.

### There Is A Purpose to History

This section of Romans is teaching us how to reason about the origin and history of man. God made man to seek and find Him, and positioned him in both time and place to encourage that quest. Both time and circumstance have confirmed this quest could not be done independently of God. **There is not a segment of His creation, whether personal or impersonal, that can correctly function without Him.** Blessed is the person who sees and embraces this truth. Such an one is well on the way to experiencing the good and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

### “But”

The word “**BUT**” introduces a contrasting thought—in particular one that declares a Divine working as compared to a human one. The words “*but God*” occur forty-three times in Scripture (Gen 20:3; 31:7; 45:8; 48:21; 50:20; Ex 13:18; 21:13; Judges 15:19; 1 Sam 23:14; 1 Chron 28:3; Psa 49:15; 64:7; 68:21; 73:26; 75:7; Prov 21:12; Isa 17:13; Jonah 4:7; Mark 12:7; Luke 5:21; 12:20; 16:15; Acts 7:9; 10:28; 13:30; Rom 5:8; 6:17; 1 Cor 1:27; 2:10; 3:6,7; 6:13; 7:15;

10:13; 12:24; 15:38; Gal 3:18,20; 6:14; Eph 2:4; Phil 2:27). In all of these cases, the intervention of God turned the tide. The phrase “*but the Lord*” occurs fifty times in Scripture, and consistently conveys the same truth (Gen 39:21; Ex 10:20,27; Deut 1:45; 2:21; 3:26; 4:20; 7:23; 9:19; 23:5; 28:65; 1 Sam 1:5; 7:10; 16:7; 2 Sam 22:19; 1 Kings 19:11,12; 17:36,39; 1 Chron 16:26; 2 Chron 6:8; Psa 9:7; 18:18; 34:19; 37:17; 94:22; 96:5; 118:13; Prov 16:2,9; 17:3; 21:2; Isa 5:16; 60:2,19; Jer 1:7; 10:10; 16:15; 20:11; 23:8; 36:26; Hos 8:13; Joel 3:16; Jonah 1:4; Hab 2:20; Acts 9:15; 1 Cor 7:10; 2 Thess 3:3).

**“BUT NOW” = After 2,500 years of moral and spiritual futility among the Gentiles, and after 1,500 years of moral and spiritual futility among the Jews under the Law. The testimony of nature, the witness of the conscience, and the attestation of the Law left man unchanged.**

I have taken the time to list these references for a purpose. It is not a mere academic exercise, or a word study. Rather, it is intended to confirm there is a certain accent throughout Scripture. **Needed change is always introduced by God, and never by man.** When, therefore, we read “*but now,*” we are not reading of the progression of man, or the result of some mythical evolutionary process. Man continued to digress until God did something about it. He continued to be basically unrighteous until God intervened. Man was incapable of fulfilling his appointed purpose until the God of heaven undertook on the behalf of humanity with wisdom and power.

From another perspective “**BUT NOW**” means since Jesus has died, raised again, and is seated at the right hand of God. “**NOW**” is the time when the world has been reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18), sin has been expiated (Heb 9:26), and the devil destroyed (Heb 2:14). As it is written, “*For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, NOW is the day of salvation*” (2 Cor 6:2). This is a new day, a new time, the period for which men

have longed since first they heard of a Savior and His great deliverance. “**NOW**” we have received the atonement (Rom 5:11). “**NOW**” we are made free from sin (Rom 6:22). “**NOW**” we are delivered from the condemning law (Rom 7:6). “**NOW**” there is no condemnation (Rom 8:1). “**NOW**” in Christ Jesus we who were afar have been made near (Eph 2:13). “**NOW**” we are no more foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God (Eph 2:19). “**NOW**” God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us (Eph 3:20).

Our need was assessed according to the past. Our benefit is declared in accord with the present time: the time when Christ “*is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them*” (Heb 7:25).

After allotting 4,000 years for humanity to correct itself, not a single righteous person was found. In fact, men made no real effort to correct their condition, for there was not one who sought the Lord, or did good independently of Divine influence. No champion arose from “*the sons of Adam*” (Deut 32:8) to rescue mankind. “**BUT NOW**” that Jesus has put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and is seated on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, a wonderful announcement is made.

### THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Having established that all persons are unrighteous by nature, and impotent to change their state, the Spirit now returns to the subject introduced in the first chapter. “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, ‘He who through faith is righteous shall live’*”<sup>RSV</sup> (Rom 1:16-17).

### Connecting the Thought

The extensive reasoning to which we have just been exposed (1:18 through 3:20) is a parenthetical thought. It confirmed the need for a righteousness from God. Whatever men may think of the

capacity of the human will, or the strength of human resolve, **four thousand years of accumulated history confirmed no one obeyed the testimony of nature, the law of the conscience, or the Law of God, as given through Moses.** Righteousness, therefore, must be made known by God. It will not come by further exposure to nature, for that has already proved inadequate. It will not come by elevating the conscience of men, for it has already been shown that men, by nature, pay no heed to their conscience. The revelation will not come by means of the Law, for its administration produced no righteous person. Now we return to a consideration of the righteousness itself.

### Revealed In the Gospel

This is the *“righteousness”* that is revealed, or declared, in the Gospel (Rom 1:16-17). **Where this righteousness is not announced, the Gospel has not been preached,** for it is revealed in, or by means of, the Gospel of Christ. Wherever men have attempted to preach the Gospel with *“wisdom of words”* or *“enticing words of man’s wisdom,”* this righteousness has been obscured (1 Cor 1:17; 2:4). Such preaching empties the cross of its power. As it is written, *“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel--not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power”*<sup>NIV</sup> (1 Cor 1:17). In every case, and with no exception, *“another Gospel”* (2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6) successfully obscures the revelation of *“the righteousness of God.”*

This is *“the righteousness which is from God by faith”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Phil 3:9). It is not developed, it is *“revealed.”* It is not the result of our works, but comes *“through faith.”* It does not contribute to human boasting, but leads *“to faith”*—deeper and increasing faith (Rom 1:17).

### God’s Own Righteousness

This is God’s own righteousness—His own character, or Divine nature. It is a *“gift”* that is given to us because of Christ,

through Christ, and by faith (Rom 5:17). The realization, or participation in, this righteousness is the work of God. Thus it is written, *“For He [God] hath made Him [Jesus Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him [Jesus Christ]”* (2 Cor 5:21). This is a staggering consideration! Other versions read, *“that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”*<sup>NASB</sup> . . . *“that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*<sup>NIV</sup>

Note, the proclamation is not that we will start doing what is righteous, but that we will become *“the righteousness of God.”* The doing of true righteousness now becomes the evidence of a righteousness already possessed. As it is written, *“he that doeth righteousness IS*

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*righteous, even as he is righteous”* (1 John 3:7). And, to dispel all doubt, those who *“become the righteousness of God”* will, as they live by faith, *“do”* righteousness.

Becoming *“the righteousness of God”* is what makes us God’s *“workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works”* (Eph 2:10). It is what makes the new birth a NEW birth, separating us from the fleshly order. While the presence of the Holy Spirit

confirms we are *“the sons of God”* (Gal 4:6), being *“made the righteousness of God”* is what changes our nature. In that experience, and through the promises of the Gospel, we become *“partakers of the Divine nature”* (2 Pet 1:4).

### Elaborating on the Righteousness

It should not surprise us that the Christian community is sharply divided on the precise nature of this righteousness. I will list a few of these views because of the pivotal nature of this passage. Also, very little is said these days about this passage on *“the righteousness of God.”*

- ▶ Origen (185-254 B.C.) understood this to be God’s attribute of justice.
- ▶ Chrysostom (347-407 B.C.) Felt it referred to Divine clemency, or His mercifulness to forgive.
- ▶ John Campbell (1800-1872 B.C.) said it consisted in man’s conformity to the declared will of God.
- ▶ Macknight taught the righteousness of God signified the righteousness belonging to faith itself.
- ▶ Bishop Newcomb translated the phrase *“the righteousness of God”* as *“God’s method of justification.”*
- ▶ Tholuck said of this verse, *“The Gospel makes known a way to the perfect fulfillment of the law which is required by God.”*
- ▶ Stuart explains *“the righteousness of God”* is *“the justification God bestows.”*<sup>Taken from Haldane’s Commentary on Romans</sup>

### Righteousness and Justification

It is necessary to understand that *“righteousness”* and *“justification”* are not synonymous. While they come from the same root word, they do not mean the same thing. ***“Righteousness”* is a state of unblemished character. *“Justification”* is the means by which this character is imparted to men.**

In my judgment, we must avoid the notion that God makes men righteous by giving them the ability to keep His Law.

While the righteousness of the Law IS fulfilled in those who are righteous, it is fulfilled by their walk in the Spirit. As it is written, *“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Rom 8:4). In this case, character is not the result of the fulfillment of the Law, but the fulfillment is a result of character. While this may appear to be a fine distinction, it is a necessary one. Prior to this, the book of Romans has affirmed that **man’s doing has been his undoing**. Salvation does not rest upon man’s doing, but upon God’s doing. That is why HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS is given to us, rather than a law demanding that we develop our own.

Righteousness is the result of Divine creation, not human doing. Isaiah prophesied of this day of salvation, *“You heavens above, rain down righteousness; let the clouds shower it down. Let the earth open wide, let salvation spring up, let righteousness grow with it; I, the LORD, have created it”*<sup>NIV</sup> (Isa 45:8). In confirmation of this, our state in Christ is described by the Spirit in these words. *“Put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth”*<sup>NASB</sup> (Eph 4:24).

The *“new man”* is nothing less than the result of God’s *“gift of righteousness.”* That nature, is described in this manner: *“the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him”* (Col 3:10). Believers are admonished to *“put on”* the new man.

We are apprized that this new nature, or the part of us that is *“born of God,”* is not capable of sin. Nor, indeed, can Satan touch this part of us. *“Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God”* (1 John 3:8). And again, *“We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him”* (1 John 5:18). That nature is *“the righteousness of God”*—the Divine nature, given to us because of Christ and through

our faith.

To *“put on the new man”* is to live by faith and walk in the Spirit. It is to provide a spiritual climate in which the Lord can work and Satan cannot. Putting on the *“new man”* involves living in agreement with the Divine nature of which we are made *“partakers.”* We will do what is right if this is done.

**if men are to learn of and experience “the righteousness of God,” they must be delivered from the notion that they can become righteous by doing. The emphasis must be placed upon believing, otherwise righteousness is beyond our reach. This does not eliminate doing, but rather makes doing possible, for without the righteousness of God, it is not possible to do the will of God.**

**APART FROM THE LAW**

This righteousness is made known *“apart from,”* or separate from, the Law. While the Law of Moses, given as a covenant to Israel, is the particular focus, this word applies to **any law**. The only righteousness God will receive is NOT made known through, or facilitated by, the principle of law. How poignantly the Spirit says it. *“I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly”*<sup>NASB</sup> (Gal 2:21). Those, therefore, who seek to produce righteousness by adherence to a moral code or by means of a routine or procedure, have nullified God’s grace for themselves. They have embraced a religion that has no need for Jesus, and thrust the righteousness of God from themselves.

This does not mean the Law itself is unrighteous. Rather, it confirms the Law holds up a standard that natural man cannot attain. It is IMPOSSIBLE for man to become righteous because of what he does, or by means of law—any law. Thus it is written, *“Is the law then against the*

*promises of God? Certainly not! For if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law”* (Gal 3:21). The way out of sin is not through law, commandment, or procedure of any kind. If a God-given law could not retrieve men from the fall and enable them to be righteous, there is **no** law that can do so.

Thus *“the righteousness of God”* is revealed to us **“without the law,”**<sup>KJV</sup> or **“apart from the law.”** There is a good reason for this. Righteousness is appropriated by faith, and the Law has nothing whatsoever to do with faith. As it is written, *“The law is not based on faith; on the contrary, “The man who does these things will live by them””*<sup>NIV</sup> (Gal 3:12). **Nowhere does the Law require faith, or give a promise to those who will believe.** Law operates on a different principle. It is based upon DOING, not believing. *“The man who does these things will live by them”* (Rom 10:5).

Thus, if men are to learn of and experience *“the righteousness of God,”* they must be delivered from the notion that they can become righteous by doing. The **emphasis** must be placed upon believing, otherwise righteousness is beyond our reach. This does not eliminate doing, but rather makes doing possible, for without the righteousness of God, it is not possible to do the will of God.

**IS REVEALED**

Because this righteousness comes from God, it is said to be *“revealed,”* or *“manifested.”*<sup>KJV</sup> The word used here (manifested or revealed) means something that already exists is made known, or becomes apparent. This does not speak of something that develops, and then appears by virtue of its growth. Rather, it is something already developed that is opened up to the understanding of men. Further, until it is revealed, it is not possible to know of it. By its very nature, the thing to be revealed is hidden from human understanding. No amount of mental discipline or diligent search will discover it. It a thing cannot be known by human effort, revelation is not necessary.

For example, men of extraordinarily disciplined minds may study the complexities of nature, yet they will NEVER come upon *“the righteousness of God.”* Nature does not testify of God’s righteousness, but of His *“eternal power and Godhead.”* Those possessing astute powers of reason may probe the moral requirements of God, yet they will not discover a righteousness that can be given to men. This is a provision that must be revealed. The good news is that it has been made known through the Gospel of Christ. It is not made known through something that is seen, like creation. It is not revealed through requirements, like the Law. Rather, it is manifested through a message of Divine accomplishment and provision.

Law discovers sin, defining it and convicting of it. But it cannot produce a righteousness that finds the sinner free from sin and able to stand confidently before the Lord. When it comes to the revelation of the righteousness of God, we must come higher than Law can bring us.

**WITNESSED BY THE LAW AND PROPHETS**

Other versions read, *“to which the Law and the Prophets testify,”*<sup>NIV</sup> *“attested by the law and the prophets,”*<sup>NRSV</sup> and *“although the law and the prophets bear witness to it.”*<sup>RSV</sup> The matter to which both the Law and the Prophets witnessed was a righteousness from God. Neither of them declared that it was present, but that it was coming.

The witness of the Law and the Prophets was twofold. **First**, they confirmed that men needed a righteousness from God. **Second**, they foretold by types and prophecies that such a righteousness would be provided by God.

**The Law: Righteousness Needed**

The Law held before men the requirements of God. The Ten Commandments were precisely that: *“commandments.”* They were neither suggestions nor goals. The Law placed before men a means to life: *“You shall therefore keep My statutes and My*

*judgments, which if a man does, he shall live by them: I am the LORD”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Lev 18:5). To *“live”* before God equates to being accepted by, and united to, Him. Those who took the Law seriously became acutely aware of their own unrighteousness, and of the absolute essentiality of righteousness before God. It whetted the appetite of sensitive hearts for that righteousness.

In **the sacrificial system**, outlined in the book of Leviticus, a witness to the righteousness of God was also seen. The need for the shedding of blood, cleansing, and atonement set before men the need for a means to approach God. A sense of the necessity of cleansing was developed, as well as the need for God being approached with the utmost sobriety (Heb 5:1; 8:3; 9:9,23; 10:1-11; 10:11).

**Law discovers sin, defining it and convicting of it. But it cannot produce a righteousness that finds the sinner free from sin and able to stand confidently before the Lord. When it comes to the revelation of the righteousness of God, we must come higher than Law can bring us.**

**The ministry of the High Priest** declared the need for the ongoing provision of Divine satisfaction. A righteousness from God, while once conferred, would require the presence of an active representative before the Living God. That representative must be selected by God, and accomplish the work of God. All of this is fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 2:17; 3:1; 4:14-16; 5:5-10; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1-3; 9:7-25; 10:21; 13:11).

**The Prophets: Righteousness Foretold**

The righteousness announced in the Gospel was witnessed to by the holy

prophets. They spoke of a time of acceptability, and of a change in character.

As a prophet, **Moses** spoke of a time when men would be changed. *“And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live”* (Deut 30:6). This circumcision is experienced in Christ Jesus, and is a view of being granted *“the righteousness of God”* (Col 2:11-12).

**Ezekiel** witnessed to this righteousness as the removal of the heart of stone, and the granting of a heart of flesh. *“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh”* (Ezek 36:26).

**Isaiah** proclaimed this righteousness as the experience of liberty and change. *“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert”* (Isa 35:5-6).

**Jeremiah** said it was experienced by the Lord Himself becoming our righteousness. *“In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS”* (Jer 23:6; 33:16).

**Malachi** declared the righteousness from the standpoint of its Origin, declaring it would result in renewal and release. *“But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall”* (Mal 4:2).

Because none were righteous, *“no not one,”* exceeding great and precious promises were held out to men, giving them hope of a better day. Under the

administration of the Lord Jesus, and because of His accomplishments, these promises are now realized by faith. This is why Paul said, *“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those*

*which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles”* (Acts 26:22-23). He devoted himself to the proclamation of the Gospel, in which all

that Moses and the Prophets promised was revealed. There were not theological novelties in his preaching, and there ought not be in ours. The summation of that revelation is the conferment of the righteousness of God upon men. What a marvelous announcement!

## RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH FAITH

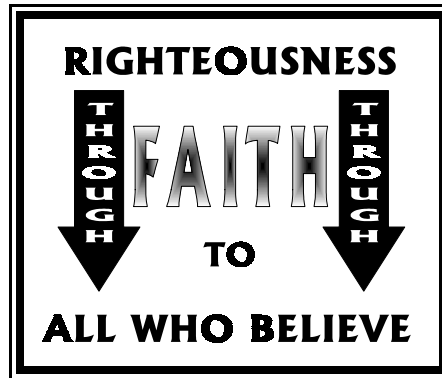
**“22a Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.”** The Spirit now elaborates on the righteousness that is revealed through the Gospel, and was witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets. This is the chief benefit flowing from the Gospel, and was the primary light displayed through both the Law and the Prophets. Without this righteousness, there would have been no purpose for the Law. The Prophets would also have served no lasting purpose were they not to have pointed forward to this singular experience.

### EVEN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

Notice what care is taken by the Holy Spirit. He leaves no room for any man-developed righteousness. There is no place for a righteousness proceeding from the Law. There is only one acceptable righteousness, and that is the righteousness BELONGING TO God Himself. While the righteousness comes FROM God, that is not the point of this expression. The ownership of the righteousness is the point. It is God’s righteousness.

Having confirmed that God has found none that were righteous, He now turns from the vanity of men to the effectiveness of God. There are two sides to the coin of salvation. (1) The removal of transgression, and (2) The receiving of righteousness from God. The emphasis is placed upon the latter. The remission of sins is in order to the reception of the righteousness of God, for that righteousness cannot be imparted where sin remains dominant.

There are times when salvation is viewed from the lower side of the coin—the



remission of sin. *“In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins”* (Col 1:14). *“And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses”* (Acts 13:39). *“To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins”* (Acts 10:43). This is, indeed, a marvelous accomplishment, and well ought the children of the Lord live in continual praise for it.

The remission of sin, however, would serve no lasting purpose if we were not given the righteousness of God. If only our sins were forgiven, and no righteousness received, we would be like the swept and garnished house of which Jesus spoke. *“When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first”*<sup>NKJV</sup> (Matt 12:43-45). Many a professed believer is like that house. They

have been cleansed, and everything has been rearranged. Yet, there is nothing of substance in them. They are not growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 3:18). Nor, indeed, are they drawing near to the Lord with a true heart, having their conscience purged from dead works, and their bodies washed with pure water (Heb 10:22).

This condition is largely owing to the lack of preaching concerning the righteousness of God. Neither its necessity nor availability is known by many believers. When they read the Scriptures, they read them like a manual of conduct, or a road map giving directions. They do not see the announcements or proclamations of the Scriptures. They are blinded to the types and shadows set forth in the Law, and the marvelous prophecies of the day of salvation in the Prophets. To them, righteousness is nothing more than a standard of conduct, dealing mostly with external matters, and human disciplines. It is a tragic circumstance!

Let none imagine that the word of God has nothing to say about our conduct, or about subduing sinful inclinations resident in the *“flesh,”* or sinful nature. But that is not the EMPHASIS of the *“Apostles’ doctrine.”*

### A Superior Gift

When it comes to what we receive from God, there is a gift that stands out above all others. It is greater than food, clothing, and shelter. It transcends financial provisions, health of body, and domestic blessing. It is *“the gift of righteousness”* (Rom 5:17). The remission of sin is the necessary preparation for receiving this righteousness. The gift of the Spirit is essential to its maintenance.



But the righteousness itself is the point. Those who possess it are accepted by God.

### A Brief Elaboration

I must labor this point. God is righteous in saving us, but that is not the point of phrase *“the righteousness of God.”* It is not that He is simply having mercy upon us. To dwell with the Lord forever, men must be like Him. A transformation must take place in them that makes them harmonious with the God who *“made”* them. Those at variance with the Lord will not be received by Him.

Although little is said of this in our day, this is a fundamental thread of reasoning throughout the Scriptures. From one perspective, the reason for condemnation is dissonance, or conflict, between God and man. That conflict exists in both thoughts and ways (Isa 55:8-9). It is confirmed in the ignorance of God that characterizes all who are not in Christ (Eph 4:18). It is declared in the universal indictment of humanity, *“and come short of the glory of God”* (Rom 3:23). Unless a reconciliation is effected, and men are brought into accord with God, there is no hope of salvation.

This is why *“the righteousness of God”* must be more than a mere doctrinal point, or a commentary on the Person of God. It is something that **MUST** be experienced, possessed, and resident in us.

### THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

Having established the need for having *“the righteousness of God,”* the Spirit now addresses the means through which it is received. How is it that the righteousness of God can be received? At this point, men have often chose to argue about the matter rather than declare the Gospel. The Spirit will not present alternative views of the subject, but will simply affirm the means.

The reception of this righteousness is unequivocally *“through faith in Jesus Christ.”* The KJV reads, *“which is by faith of Jesus Christ.”* By this, the faith Jesus had is not intended, but the faith He authors (Heb 12:2). Again, there is no point to arguing about this, it is *“given”*

unto us *“to believe”* (Phil 1:29).

The reception of faith is not a one time experience. For example, Paul told the Ephesian saints he had heard of their *“faith in the Lord Jesus”* (Eph 1:15). Yet, in his benediction to them he said, *“Peace to the brethren, and love WITH FAITH, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Eph 6:23). In my judgment, there is a great need for such a blessing in the church of our time.

*“Faith”* is the possession, and *“believe”* is the expression of that faith. From another aspect, faith is the ability to believe—to be convinced and assured of the truth of Jesus Christ.

***“Faith” is the possession, and “believe” is the expression of that faith. From another aspect, faith is the ability to believe—to be convinced and assured of the truth of Jesus Christ.***

The preeminent focus of faith is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In fact, the summation of God’s Word is represented as *“the record that God gave of his Son,”*<sup>KJV</sup> or *“the witness that God has borne concerning His Son”*<sup>NASB</sup> (1 John 5:10). The primary testimony of God does not concern the direction of human conduct, but the Person of His Son. No individual will spiritually advance until his attention is placed upon the Son of God, the very heart of Divine witness.

Faith in Christ is a persuasion that He is precisely Who God has declared Him to be. HE is the Savior of the world (1 John 4:14). HE is the One who is bringing us to God (1 Pet 3:18). HE has reconciled us to God (2 Cor 5:18). HE has destroyed the devil (Heb 2:14). HE has plundered principalities and powers (Col 2:15). HE is the head of all things for the church (Eph 1:22-23). HE is presently mediating the New Covenant (Heb 12:24). HE is interceding for us at this time (Heb 7:25). HE will come and receive us to Himself,

that where He is, there we be also (John 14:3). These are not mere points of doctrine, but realities to be embraced by the heart.

Faith involves persuasion and confidence. As it is written, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”*<sup>NASB</sup> (Heb 11:1). Faith is convinced that what God has *“promised, He was able also to perform”* (Rom 4:21). It embraces the declaration of the Gospel with both hands.

This perfectly accords with the rest of Scripture. The focus of real faith is Christ Himself. Thus Paul answered the question *“What must I do to be saved?”* with these words: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house”* (Acts 16:31). God is proclaimed as the Justifier of *“the one who has faith in Jesus”* (Rom 3:26). Justification is pointedly said NOT to be by the works of the Law but *“by faith in Jesus Christ”* (Gal 2:16). The promise of God is realized *“by faith in Jesus Christ”* (Gal 3:22). As we approach the Lord, boldness and access are realized *“through faith in Him”* (Eph 3:12). Paul articulated the appointed quest of all believers. It was to be *“found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith”* (Phil 3:9).

All of this may appear rather elementary, but it is not. Great stress is placed upon faith in Jesus Christ because men are easily diverted from this central matter. It is altogether too common for men to accent **WHAT** is believed rather than **WHO** is believed.

### Called into Christ’s Fellowship

*“Faith in Jesus Christ”* earnestly seeks to appropriate what He has been appointed to give. It longs to be with Him, know Him, and fellowship with Him. God has not called us into the fellowship of a denomination or train of thought. Rather, He has *“called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”* (1 Cor 1:9).

Let it be clear, **no salvational**



**benefits will be realized apart from companionship with Jesus!** Those who are aloof from Jesus are, by that very circumstance, excluded from His blessings. Satan has deluded people into thinking they can push Jesus Christ to the background of their lives and still be approved of God. Men have even succumbed to demonic doctrines that justify such a conclusion. But these are all imaginations to be cast down with our mighty spiritual weaponry (2 Cor 10:5-6). Faith in Christ cannot be part-time, occasional, or seasonal. If it is not the dominating principle of life, it will soon be

**“To all”**

This phrase emphasizes the imputation, or conferment, of righteousness upon the believer. This will be developed at length in the fourth chapter. It accents that righteousness is a gift, and not an achievement.

**“On all”**

This expression coincides with the prophecy of Isaiah. *“For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness”* (Isa 61:10). The 132<sup>nd</sup> Psalm reads, *“Let Your priests be*

It would be interesting to hear that question answered by denominational devotees. The answer, of course, will confirm to us the substance of Philip’s preaching. The eunuch answered, *“I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:36-37). That is the believing of reference in our text.

**What About Obedience?**

The disciple of Law is not content with the promise of righteousness upon the basis of faith in Christ, or believing. Such imagine that faith must have obedience added to it. But this is not the case at all. Obedience is inherent in faith. Where obedience is not found, faith is not present! It is by faith that we obey, for obedience is neither possible nor recognized apart from faith.

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Is it not written *“By faith Abraham . . . obeyed”* (Heb 11:8). Abel offered his sacrifice *“by faith”* (Heb 11:4). Noah prepared the ark *“by faith”* (Heb 11:7). Moses kept the Passover *“by faith”* (Heb 11:28). Israel passed through the Red Sea *“by faith”* (Heb 11:29). Faith is the engine of obedience, and the only guarantee that it will be heartfelt and effective.

dashed upon the rocks of carnality.

**TO ALL AND ON ALL**

<sup>22</sup> *The righteousness of God . . . unto all and upon all them.*” Other versions read *“for all who believe,”*<sup>RISV</sup> *“for all those who believe,”*<sup>NASB</sup> and *“to all who believe.”*<sup>NIV</sup> I prefer the KJV, NKJV, Webster, Douay-Rheims, Revised Webster, and Young’s Literal translations: *“to all and upon (on) all.”* Such notable commentators as Barnes, Calvin, Gill, Haldane, Hodge, Jamieson Fausset and Brown, John Wesley, and others also receive these words. Of itself, this does not authenticate the text. I only share it to confirm this is not a strange view, and those who accept it are not theological renegades.

The strongest argument for the words *“to and on,”* or *“to and upon”* are not the manuscripts from which they were translated. Nor, indeed, do we bow at the shrine of the scribes and textual experts as though their research was infallible. These words are in perfect harmony with the remainder of Scripture, and in no wise do violence to the truth. There is no need for them to be discarded. Neither faith nor scholarship demands their removal. Thus I choose to retain and believe them.

*clothed with righteousness, And let Your saints shout for joy.*” The idea is that, while in this world, we are covered with this righteousness.

**WHO BELIEVE**

The nominal church does not place much emphasis upon faith, or believing God. Generally, the issue is “what” men believe. Significant divisions exist among professed believers over the particular points of doctrine that are embraced. I do not deny that some of this can be justified. But this is NOT the focus of our text, nor of the Scriptures themselves.

Here believing is not mental assent, or even an activity of the mind. Believing is accomplished in the essential nature of man—his heart. Thus it is written, *“For with the heart one believes unto righteousness”* (Rom 10:10). More of the Divine image is in the heart than the mind. The heart can more powerfully motivate the individual than the mind.

When the Ethiopian eunuch interrupted Philip by asking, *“See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?”*, the answer was clear and in strict harmony with our text. *“If you believe with all your heart, you may.”*

Those who believe in Christ Jesus will do what He says. Our text, however, is not focusing on that aspect of spiritual life. It is going to the heart of the matter, showing what makes men acceptable with God. Faith moves us into the domain of acceptance. It opens the door of heaven to us, and becomes the enablement of obedience. In that, we are to rejoice.

Without faith, it is not possible to please God (Heb 11:6). All effort, in such a case, will be futile, and will yield no acceptable results. If, on the other hand, men will believe in Jesus, and live by faith, they will become pleasing to God and productive in His Kingdom. As elementary as that may appear, it is something that is constantly affirmed in Scripture.

Faith is never taken for granted by the Holy Spirit. We are urged to fight the good fight of faith, and examine ourselves to see whether we be in the faith. We are also to see to it that an evil heart of unbelief does not rise in us.

## THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE

<sup>23b</sup> **For there is no difference,<sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,<sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.** With spiritual mastery, the Apostle now shows the heavenly logic behind our justification. This is not thinking after the manner of men, nor will it be accepted by those who are dominated by the carnal mind. The reasoning here declared, makes sense only to faith. Only those who are believing in the Lord Jesus Christ will find this to be a joyful sound.

### FOR . . .

The word “for” is a rhetorical one. It introduces a reason for the circumstance just described—namely the righteousness of God being conferred on all who believe. The RSV and NRSV versions read, “since.” We might use the word “because,” or the expression, “in view of this.” It will become clear in this text that the ONLY real distinction among men is the possession of the righteousness of God. Apart from that, real distinctions cannot be found.

### THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE

<sup>22b</sup> . . . *there is no difference.*” The Spirit reaffirms the reality stated in verse nine. “For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.” From the positive view, the text explains why the righteousness of God is “unto all and upon all them that believe.” This same truth is reaffirmed in the tenth chapter. “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek” (10:12).

By saying “there is no difference,” the Spirit is confirming there is no other way of obtaining the righteousness of God, other than through faith. There is no cause resident within men that can justify God imputing His righteousness to them.

Herein is found a great cause for confidence in the believer. The righteousness of God raises the most lowly sinner to acceptance with God. There is

no cause to lament because of a supposed lack of gifts, or to boast because of seeming successes.

By nature, no person can rise above Adam, through which sin entered into the world Rom 5:12). In fact, were Adam to appear in our generation in his fallen state, he would be vastly superior in every way to the whole world of humanity. There has been a marked degeneracy in men from every aspect, spiritual, moral, and physical.

There may be differences in the abilities men possess, or their dispositions. Their possessions, education, or attainments may appear to be different. But all of those distinctions are on a lower level, having nothing whatsoever to do with Divine acceptance. Nor, indeed, do they provide for the acquisition of righteousness by differing means. Fundamentally, and at the very heart of the human circumstance, “there is no difference,” either in the need for of the

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means of acquiring “the righteousness of God.”

### SINNED AND FALL SHORT

<sup>23</sup> . . . *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” The text goes beyond a mere philosophical statement. Two incontrovertible facts are stated. They confirm there is “no difference” among men. They also corroborate the

intrinsic need men have for “the righteousness of God.”

### “Have sinned”

The condition of humanity can be traced back to Adam, but all guilt is not resident in him. As it is written, “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that **all have sinned**” (Rom 5:12). From one perspective, that sin was a matter of choice. From another, it was the expression of a fallen nature. If this were not the case, some would NOT have sinned. However, no such person can be found. In all ages, and in all places, “all have sinned.” Whether with Law or without Law, “all have sinned.” Whether within the framework of a covenant or apart from one, “all have sinned.” If there is a mortal anywhere who affirms I “have not sinned,” he makes God a liar and His word is not in him (1 John 1:10).

By “sinned” the Spirit means lived in contradiction of the nature of God. It is true that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). However, even before the Law “sin was in the world” (Rom 5:13). It is quite true that “sin is not imputed when there is no law” (5:13b), but it still exists, and is a reality that must be addressed. All men have conducted themselves unlike God. They have all rejected preliminary Divine overtures, whether in nature or in Law. Their corrupt nature has expressed itself, confirming that of themselves they are not righteous.

Care must be taken not to assume this means all sin is alike. That is not the case, as is emphatically stated in the first chapter (1:23-31). There is such a thing as a “greater sin” (John 19:11), and “exceedingly wicked” sin (Gen 13:13). However, even though there are differences in the degree of sin, there “is no difference” in the fact of sin, or the need for righteousness.

### “Fall short”

*The means through which God's righteousness is received is a central doctrine of Scripture, by Given O. Blakely*

Not only is man guilty of sinning in the past (“*have sinned*”), he is in the processing of falling, or coming short, of the glory of God. When compared with God, “*all*” come short of His glory. Though bearing His image, man is flawed at the core. He needs God’s glory and righteousness. The words “*come short*” or “*fall short*” come from a single Greek word. It is *ὀστεροῦνται*, and means “be behind, fail, destitute of, and fail to be a partaker of, or fail to reach.” The idea is not that man has some Divine glory, but not the measure intended. Neither does it mean he has some righteousness, but not quite enough.

The lack of Divine glory in the natural man can be seen in Isaiah’s response to seeing the glory of God. In one grand moment, the prophet saw “*the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*” In that moment a keen sense of his own lack registered upon his spirit. In desperation he cried out, “*Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts*” (Isa 6:1-5). No one had to tell Isaiah he “*come short of the glory of God.*” He sensed the vast chasm between himself and the Living God—and he was a mighty Prophet!

There is a serious need in our day for an awareness of the glory of God. It has been so shrouded by organized religion that men scarcely know there is such a thing. It is for this reason that men are not pressing into the Kingdom, seizing it, as it was, by violence (Matt 5 1:12; Luke 16:16).

**Proof of Universal Guilt?**

Generally, Romans 3:23 is used to establish the universal guilt of sin. Indeed, that is the postulate behind the text, but that is not its purpose. The Spirit has already “*proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin*” (3:9). The purpose of this text is to show WHY the righteousness of God is “*unto all and upon all them that believe.*” It confirms why there are not multiple ways to obtain the righteousness of God.

**BEING JUSTIFIED FREELY**

<sup>24a</sup> . . . *being justified freely.*” The Spirit now declares what is involved in becoming “*the righteousness of God*” (2 Cor 5:21), or receiving the righteousness of God by faith.

**“Being”**

The condition to be described is not a goal, but a present possession. It is a state of “*being.*” The NIV reads “*ARE justified.*” The NRSV accents it even more: “*they are NOW justified.*” Our text, then, concerns the present state of believers. The value of knowing this cannot be overstated.

**In order for God to dwell with man, sins must be remitted, or cancelled out. Too, without the presence of the Holy Spirit, a life pleasing to God is impossible. Again, both of these occur when men are justified.**

**“Justified”**

To be “*justified*” is to be made righteous by Another. The words “*being justified,*” or “*are now justified*” come from a single Greek word, *δικαιούμενοι*. This single word contains more than any single English word. That is largely why the Spirit is expounding it. Linguistically, the word means “to be put into a right relationship with God, acquitted, declared or treated as righteous.”<sup>Barclay-Newman</sup> This is not the work of men, but of God Himself. The reason compelling God to do so is not the submission of man, but the obedience of Christ. As it is written, “*by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous*” (Rom 5:19).

“*Being justified*” involves two requirements. (1) Deliverance from the guilt and power of sin, and (2) Procuring the righteousness of God. This perspective is developed several places in the Apostolic doctrine.

“*Who hath delivered us from the*

*power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (Col 1:13). The “*power of darkness*” is the realm in which there is no difference. It maintains such a hold upon men, they must be “*delivered*” from it. “*The kingdom of God’s dear Son*” is the domain in which Divine acceptance and victory are realized. Men must be transferred by Another into this Kingdom. They are impotent to do it themselves. Justification involves both of these Divine works.

“*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord*” (Acts 3:19). It is not possible to experience Divine acceptance while our sins remain associated with us. They must be blotted out from before the Lord. The “*times of refreshing*” are the experience of Divine sustenance and blessing. When men are justified, both of these are gloriously accomplished.

“*Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*” (Acts 2:38). In order for God to dwell with man, sins must be remitted, or cancelled out. Too, without the presence of the Holy Spirit, a life pleasing to God is impossible. Again, both of these occur when men are justified.

“*To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me*” (Acts 26:18). A transition must take place from the realm of darkness and ignorance to that of light and illumination. Sins must be forgiven, and an inheritance among the people of God obtained. If these do not take place, there is no hope of salvation. Praise the Lord, both are accomplished when we are “*justified.*”

Being justified is like coming out of Egypt and entering Canaan. It is being raised from death in trespasses and sins to sit with Christ in heavenly places (Eph

2:6). What God cannot abide is removed, and what He wants to give is received.

**“Freely”**

The word “freely” is rich with meaning. It carries the idea of gratuitously, or without human cause. It also carries the idea of “without cost, as a free gift.” It also means undeservedly, or without [human] reason.

This is the ONLY way righteousness can be given to men, for “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” It is not a reward for doing good, for “there is none that doeth good, no not one” (3:12).

The prophet Isaiah foretold of the nature of justification. “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have **no money**, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk **without money and without price**”<sup>NKJV</sup> (Isa 55:1). In justification, what will be our inheritance in glory is tasted in this world in a first fruits sense. Jesus has promised, “I will give of the fountain of the water of life **freely** to him who thirsts” (Rev 21:6). That begins now, in justification, when we are made righteous.

**BY HIS GRACE**

“<sup>24b</sup> . . . by His grace.” Here “grace” is contrasted with “works.” As it is written elsewhere, “And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work” (Rom 11:6). Either righteousness is a reward for doing what is good, or it is a gift from God. Our text confirms the latter: it is a gift from God, given apart from human merit or accomplishment.

While men do enter into the matter, their part is neither foundational nor causal. In our salvation, God is motivated by himself-by His own Nature. The impetus behind our salvation is not human need or a human quest, but the inclination of God Himself.

**Favor**

“Grace” is an exceedingly large word. It includes the idea of favor, regard,

or blessing. This is expressed in the words, “But Noah found *grace in the eyes of the Lord*” (Gen 6:8).

**Divine Pleasure**

“Grace” also includes the idea of pleasure; i.e., that God takes pleasure in justifying men. The whole plan of salvation is “according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph 1:5). This is the “good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself” (Eph 1:9). There is a telling expression of this facet of grace in the Thessalonian Epistle. “Therefore we also pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the **good pleasure of His goodness** and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus

**“Redemption” is a key word in Scripture. It speaks of liberation procured by the payment of a ransom. Outside of Christ men are “sold under sin” (Rom 7:14). The bondage was so extensive that a large price was required to set us free.**

Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, **according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ**” (2 Thess 1:11-12).

**Abundance**

“Grace” carries the thought of liberality, abundance, and copiousness. Thus those in Christ Jesus are said to receive “**abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness**” (Rom 5:17). One of the great expressions of this truth is found in First Timothy 1:14. “And the **grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.**”

**Purpose**

“Grace” also includes the thought of Divine purpose or objective. Grace carries the idea of producing something, or completing a Divine purpose. Thus we are

called “according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). A grand statement of this facet of grace is found in the book of Second Timothy. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (1:9).

**Concluding Thoughts on Grace**

Thus, when we are said to be “justified freely by His grace,” we are to understand the following.

1. To be justified is an evidence of God’s favor and blessing. It is the highest token of Divine regard in this world.
2. We are to understand that God takes pleasure in justifying us, or giving us His righteousness. When we seek first His righteousness we are not infringing on forbidden territory.
3. Because grace is abundant, righteousness is also abundant. We did not receive a mere token of righteousness, but the righteousness of God Himself.
4. Divine objectives are being fulfilled in our justification. When we are made righteous, it is not only for our own satisfaction, although that is surely realized. This is the purpose for which Jesus was commissioned to bring us to God for fellowship and participation.

**THROUGH THE REDEMPTION THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS**

“<sup>24c</sup> . . . through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” Salvation, in a sense, is very technical, addressing and including all Divine requirements. We are not simply pronounced righteous, but made righteous “through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”<sup>NIV</sup>

“Redemption” is a key word in Scripture. It speaks of liberation procured by the payment of a ransom. Outside of Christ men are “sold under sin” (Rom 7:14). The bondage was so extensive that a large price was required to set us free. After four thousand consecutive years of human history, it was apparent a

Redeemer could not come from the lineage of Adam. As the forty-ninth Psalm so poignantly says it, *“No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a ransom for him-- the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough”*<sup>NIV</sup> (v 7-8).

**Developed Under the Law**

The idea of redemption was not borrowed from heathen cultures, as some sophists suggest. It is a concept belonging to and developed by the God of heaven. The first glimpse of it is afforded in the making of coats, or garments, of skin for Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21). So far as we know, however, that was not attended with an explanation. At the very best, the understanding of Adam and Eve would have been very sparse on the matter of redemption. It is clear that Abel also had some idea of redemption, as he *“brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions”*<sup>NASB</sup> (Gen 4:4). The text indicates either a multiplicity of firstlings in a single sacrifice, or a firstling offered during multiple occasions. Yet, little was known of the extent of redemption. It remained for that concept to be developed under the Law.

The law contains twenty-nine references to *“redeem”* (Ex 6:6; 13:13,15; 34:20; Lev 25:25,26,29,32,48,49; 27:13;15, 19,20,27,31; Num 18:15,16,17), four to *“redemption”* (Lev 25:24,51,52; Num 3:49), and twenty-three to *“redeemed”* (Ex 15:13; 21:8; Lev 19:20; 25:30,31,48,54; 27:20; 27,28,29,33; Num 3:46,48,49,51; 18:16; Deut 7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 21:8;24:18).

God redeemed Israel from Egypt (Ex 6:6). When the first born were offered to God, certain required redemption. *“But every firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb; and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. And all the firstborn of man among your sons you shall redeem”* (Ex 13:13; 34:20). The redemption was to be made *“with lamb”*—the offering of an innocent life. With great care, the necessity of redeeming what was offered to the Lord was repeated (Lev 27:26-27; Num 18:15-16). Redemption was also offered for land

(Lev 25:24).

An elaborate procedure was also instituted for redeeming a person whose debt was too great to be paid by the debtor (Lev 25:47-55). Houses were redeemed (Lev 27:15). Fields were redeemed (Lev 27:19-20). Even provision for redeeming tithes were placed into effect (Lev 27:30-31). A woman sold into slavery could be redeemed (Ex 21:8).

An acute awareness was developed that anything given to God had to be redeemed. The redemption cost was not

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insignificant, and required the commitment of the one paying it.

All of this was a shadow of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. In Him a price was paid—a ransom—for lost humanity. It was not paid simply to release those bound to sin, but to present them to God, for they had all been defiled and rendered unsuitable by sin.

**The Proclamation**

The proclamation of the Gospel is that a satisfactory redemption has been paid by Jesus. It has been presented to God Himself, to Whom the price was due. Some have imagined that the price was paid to the devil who held us captive, but that is absurd. Our release from enslavement did not depend upon Satan’s consent, but upon Divine power.

**Redeemed from the Curse of the**

**Law**

This redemption is glorious in its ramifications. Christ has *“redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith”* (Gal 3:13-14). God could not receive us while His own Law condemned us. Therefore, the exacting penalty of the Law fell upon Christ. In this redemption, the Law could no longer condemn us, thereby enabling us to receive the promise of the Spirit.

**Redeemed from Pointless Living**

As long as men were enslaved to pointless living—particularly religious life—God could not confer His righteousness upon them. The redemption, therefore, had to address this dilemma. Praise God, Christ’s redemption was effective in this matter. *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Pet 1:18-19).

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**Redeemed from the Hand of the Enemy**

As long as men remain under the power of *“the enemy,”* the devil (Matt 13:39), God cannot grant them His righteousness. They must be redeemed from His power. Thank God, Jesus has accomplished this. *“And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy”* (Psa 106:10). And again, *“Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he*

hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; and gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south” (Psa 107:2-3). Satan cannot hold those who receive this redemption.

**The Forgiveness of Sins**

This redemption includes the forgiveness of sins, thereby allowing us to come into the presence of the Lord for fellowship and blessing. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, **the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace**” (Eph 1:7). And again, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, **even the forgiveness of sins**” (Col 1:14).

**Redemption Includes the Future**

This redemption is so large that the future is also included in it. Our bodies, for example, are embraced in Christ’s

redemption. “Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the **redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory**” (Eph 1:14). This is also mentioned in the eighth chapter of Romans. “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the **firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body**” (verse 23).

That coming day is called “the day of redemption,” and we are not to grieve the Spirit of God Who has sealed us unto that day (Eph 4:30). At that time, everything purchased by Jesus will be brought pure and holy into the presence of the Lord—including our bodies.

**Eternal Redemption**

We should know that a redemption

that justifies God conferring His righteousness upon us is exceeding large. That is why it is called an “eternal redemption” (Heb 9:12). It is a redemption that has brought thorough satisfaction to God. It will also bring a rich satisfaction to those who receive it.

**Summation**

The righteousness which we so sorely required is now conferred upon us by God Himself. It is His own righteousness, and He desires to bestow it upon us. It will be an adequate and thorough covering that will compensate for the effects sin has had upon us. It will be granted to us liberally and without reservation upon the basis of our faith in Jesus Christ. Our Father vouchsafes it to us because of Jesus. He has satisfied the Father’s demands, and pleased Him by the manner and zeal in which they was accomplished. In every way, God is “well pleased” with Jesus.

**A PROPITIATION SET FORTH**

***“<sup>25</sup> Whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed.”***

You should be able to discern that Paul is preaching the Gospel to the Roman brethren, and to us as well. This is not a proclamation of what men should do, but of what God has done. It is an announcement of “the wonderful works of God,” as first declared on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11). Men must never allow their theology to take them beyond the “joyful sound” of the Gospel (Psa 89:15). Our closeness to the Lord is measured by our sensitivity to the Gospel of His Son. Our spiritual status is determined by our belief of the record God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10-11). That is why such an extensive argument is being presented.

God is not simply looking for people to do what He commands, but for those who

can see what He has done. Once the Lord is seen for what He is, and what He has done is comprehended, thankful obedience will flow like rivers of living water from the belly of the believer. However, when the Gospel of Christ becomes obscure, an inevitable retrogression will occur. It may

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be a cultured retrogression, or one seeking strict adherence to the Law, but it will thrust the person from the presence of God. In my persuasion, the knowledge of this situation is extremely rare.

**WHOM GOD HAS SET FORTH**

***“<sup>25a</sup> Whom God set forth . . . ”*** This is a strong statement. The NASB reads, “Whom God displayed publically.” Other versions read “God presented Him”<sup>NIV</sup>. “Whom God put forward”<sup>NRSV</sup>.

This involves the public appearance of Jesus “in the fulness of time” (Gal 4:4). He grew up among the very people He came to save. When He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Lk 2:52) it was before men. His ministry was public, as He went throughout cities and synagogues preaching the Kingdom of God.

But of particular emphasis is the death of Christ, wherein a covering for sin was provided. When standing before Felix, Paul made a point of the public nature of Christ’s suffering and death. “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should

show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles . . . For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; **for this thing was not done in a corner**" (Acts 26:22-26).

God has "set forth," or "displayed publically" His Son in at least two ways. First, His death was public, with both Jews and Gentiles being privy to it. The leaders and common people among the Jews participated in Christ's death, together with "both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles" (Acts 4:27). In His death, GOD was displaying Him to the world, and a memorable sight it was!

Second, God has "set forth" or "presented" Him in the Gospel. The Good News is preeminently the presentation of Christ Jesus. It is God placing Him before the people, calling upon them to perceive His love in Christ (1 John 3:16), and avail themselves of the effects of His death.

The presentation of the blood of Christ was not public, being made in heaven, in the holiest place (Heb 9:1-12). But the sacrifice itself was public, beheld by the entire universe of personalities. Angelic hosts, as well as the hosts of darkness beheld the atoning death of Christ. Men beheld the spectacle, including Jesus' disciples, His enemies, and the indifferent as well. In all of this, God was setting Jesus before the eyes of the people, calling upon them to behold the effects of their own sin, as well as the Divine remedy.

**AS A PROPITIATION BY HIS BLOOD**

<sup>e25b</sup> . . . as a propitiation by His blood . . . " God has presented Jesus "as a propitiation." This is a term rooted in the types of the Law. The word highlights the serious of sin and the nature of God. The focus of the word is the MEANS by which sins are forgiven. They cannot simply be spoken away, nor can God turn His face from them and conduct Himself as though they did not exist. Those who imagine God can countenance sin, or is tolerant of it,

are simply mistaken. They speak what they desire, not what is the truth.

This word, in its varied forms, occurs four times in the Apostle's doctrine. Our text is its first mentioning. Two variations of the word are found in First John. "And He is **the propitiation** for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world . . . Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be **the propitiation** for our sins" (2:2; 4:10). The precise word of our text also occurs in Hebrews, where it is applied to an article of Tabernacle furniture. "And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat (atonement cover<sup>NIV</sup>); of which we cannot

**To propitiate means to cover the sinner from the wrath of God. The Spirit has already declared, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom 1:18). That wrath will surely be unleashed in all of its fury in "that great and notable day of the Lord"**

now speak particularly" (9:5).

Academically, the word "propitiation" means "relating to an appeasing or expiating, having placating or expiating force."<sup>Strong's</sup> Strong's wisely says of the word, "Used of the cover of the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies, which was sprinkled with the blood of the expiatory victim on the day of atonement (this rite signifying that the life of the people, the loss of which they had merited by their sins, was offered to God in the blood as the life of the victim, and that God by this ceremony was appeased and their sins expiated); hence the lid of expiation, the propitiatory."<sup>Strong's Definitions</sup> The text in Hebrews unfolds for us the true meaning

of the word "propitiation."

**The Mercy Seat**

The construction of the "mercy seat" (Heb 9:5), is outlined in Exodus 25:17-22. It was an elaborate piece of furniture, being the lid covering the ark of the covenant. It was made of pure gold, showing unusual worth. Two cherubim of gold, hammered out of solid gold, were on the both ends of the mercy seat. Their wings were stretched out, covering the mercy seat. They were facing each other, and were looking down at the mercy seat. There, above the mercy seat, God met with the representative of the people. He spoke from between the cherubim "about everything which" that He gave "in commandment to the children of Israel."

On the "day of atonement," incense was to be placed on the alter before the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place. The intent was "that the cloud of incense may cover the mercy seat that is on the Testimony, lest he die" (Lev 16:13). The blood of the sin offering of a bull was to be sprinkled "on the mercy seat on the east side," and "before the mercy seat." Also, the blood of "the goat of the sin offering, which is for the people" was to be sprinkled "on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat" (Lev 16:14-15). All of this typified the atoning death of Christ, which is being declared in our text.

To propitiate means to cover the sinner from the wrath of God. The Spirit has already declared, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom 1:18). That wrath will surely be unleashed in all of its fury in "that great and notable day of the Lord" (Acts 2:20). Earlier, in the second chapter, it is identified as "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (2:5). There is a time when the shattering message will be sounded, "For the great day of His wrath is come" (Rev 6:17).

I realize it is not fashionable to speak



of God's wrath in these days. Indeed, some younger disciples have never heard the subject delineated. However, one of the primary aspects of Jesus is that He has "delivered is from the wrath to come" (2 Thess 1:10).

It is only through Christ that we "shall be saved from wrath" (Rom 5:9). Those who are not in Christ, who have not availed themselves of the "propitiation," are "by nature the children of wrath" in every sense of the word (Eph 2:3). The "wrath of God" will come upon "the children of disobedience" (Col 3:6).

God has set forth Jesus as a "propitiation," or covering, in the time when His wrath is going to be revealed from heaven. No other safety will be found in that day. Those who have shunned the One God has publically presented will cry in vain to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev 6:16). But shelter will only be afforded to those who are covered by Christ Jesus.

**The Blood of Christ**

Just as the blood of the sacrifices of old was placed upon the mercy seat, so the blood of Christ is the only valid appeal to the mercy of God. The KJV reads that Jesus is set forth as a propitiation "through faith in his blood." Although some rather learned arguments are presented for rejecting the phrase "faith in His blood," I choose to retain the words as they stand. I have found I am not alone in this, for great scholars and men of faith have seen fit to do the same. Nothing in the text, context, or the Gospel itself demands a rejection of them.

I take it that the phrase "faith in the blood" expresses the same idea expressed in Hebrews 9:14. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" It is at the point where we are convinced of the effectiveness of Christ's blood that our conscience is cleansed from defilement,

and we are shielded from the wrath of God.

We are "made nigh" to God "by the blood of Christ" (Eph 2:13). We were "redeemed" from the ravages of sin by it (1 Pet 1:19). Through it we have bold confidence to enter into the holiest of all, heaven itself (Heb 10:19). His blood "cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

And why is all of this so? Because the sacrifice of Christ's life has met every requirement for our acceptance by God. His wrath cannot fall on those who are availing themselves of the death of His Son. It is no wonder that God so carefully structured how men thought about blood under the Law. Thus it is written, "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev 17:11).

**the sacrifice of Christ's life has met every requirement for our acceptance by God. His wrath cannot fall on those who are availing themselves of the death of His Son.**

**HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMONSTRATED**

<sup>25d</sup> . . . to demonstrate His righteousness . . ." The details of our redemption are marvelous to consider. God has publically set forth Jesus as a remedy and covering for sin in order to "demonstrate," or "declare," His own righteousness. Although God owes us no explanation for what He does, yet He has condescended to confirm His uprightness in delivering up His Son for our offenses. Elihu was only partially right when he said to Job, "for He giveth not account of any of his matters" (Job 33:13). Since those spiritually primitive times, God has revealed more of Himself. We now know that God has explained a great deal about Himself and what He has done. The text before us is a case in point.

**THE FORBEARANCE OF GOD**

" . . . because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed." The Spirit opens to us precisely what Divine activity has been shown to be righteous. It is His forbearance with sins committed before the setting forth of Jesus.

To the sophist, or surface-thinker, this is not a great point, and little is made of it in our day. But it is a significant point with God, and we do well to look into it. Why was God so intolerant with the angels that sinned, yet so seemingly tolerant of men who continued to sin? "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet 2:4). Yet, God endured sinful man for 4,000 long years before placing His Propitiation before them.

Some might point to the flood as evidence of God's intolerance with sin. And that is, indeed, something to be pondered. However, even then, God's longsuffering waited while the ark was being prepared—a period lasting well over one century (1 Pet 3:20). There was also Sodom and Gomorrah, who were destroyed in an unparalleled pouring out of fire and brimstone from heaven (Gen 19:24; Lk 17:29). But these were the exceptions, not the norm.

Many students of Scripture have stumbled over the sins of the ancients, speaking of them as though they were rebellious, hard-hearted, and weak and vacillating as themselves. Legion is the name of those who speak of Abraham lying, Jacob being a deceiver, and David being an adulterer. But this is not how God spoke of those men, even though they committed sins that were an offense to God and a reproach to His love for them. For the patriarchs, however, sin was not the rule, and precious few transgressions are recorded against them. Actually, it is a source of amazement that they lived so notably with so little truth being revealed to them.

Our text unveils why more is not said

of their sins—only enough to confirm they too stood in need of a Savior. God did “forbear” or “pass over” the sins “previously committed,” and He freely declares that He did. The NIV reads, “He had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished.” Of course, those who insist that the God of the old Testament differs from the God of the New Testament must deal with this reality. Such false teachers portray our Lord as a God of wrath during the time before Christ, and One of love after Christ. But they would have a difficult time convincing Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David, and others of their sophistry.

God “passed over” the sins committed before in prospect of the atoning death of Christ Jesus, His only begotten Son. That death was sufficient to reach backward as well as forward. As it is written, “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Heb 9:15).

God was righteous in His forbearance, knowing that His Son would take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). That sin, whether committed before Law, during the Law, or in “the end of the world,” was addressed by the propitiating death of Christ. However, lest we presume upon the nature of God, we are to understand it was His “forbearance” that “passed over” them, not indifference.

Now that Christ’s blood has been shed and presented in the heavenly realms, God is no longer forbearing of sin. This is precisely the point Paul made to the Athenian philosophers, and it needs to be made to the philosophers of our time. “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now **commands all men everywhere to repent**, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30-31).

Another practical view of this text confirms that God has been gentle with all of us, not allowing His wrath to break out

upon us until we availed ourselves of the atonement, or reconciliation. Truly, “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Rom 2:4). Again, it is written, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet 3:9).

Notwithstanding, and lest men become complacent in their sin, “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet 3:9). In view of that certainty, “what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Pet 3:10).

God was proved to be righteous in passing over the sins of the ancients. He will also be proved righteous in condemning those who have rejected His Son, whom He has publically set forth as a propitiation for sin. God’s dealing with men is exacting in every way.

## RIGHTEOUSNESS DEMONSTRATED

<sup>26</sup> **To demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.** Our salvation MUST be right! God cannot save men at the expense of His own integrity. That would bring no honor to Him, nor could it rescue us from our bondage. There is a shallowness in many views of redemption that is uncomely for those who embrace them, and reproachful to the God they claim has saved them. Many, swept up in the tide of delusion, present God as saving people who have no real thirst for righteousness, are not engaged in a quest for heaven, and are spotted by this world. Our text will confirm this to be a serious misrepresentation of God.

### DEMONSTRATION AT THE PRESENT TIME

Not only has God been proved righteous in His forbearance of those who

sinned prior to Jesus, there is something to be known of Him “at the present time.” This phrase, “at the present time,” denotes this “day of salvation” (2 Cor 6:2). The demonstration, or declaration, has been going on since Jesus sent the Holy Spirit upon His people on the day of Pentecost. The KJV version says He is “declaring,” while the RSV and NRSV say He is proving something.

The truth being communicated is that God is righteous. The Gospel reveals “the righteousness of God” for men. However, through it God’s own personal righteousness is also affirmed. **The point of this is not simply that God is upright, but that He is righteous in saving men.** The salvation of God is so precise, and so thoroughly addresses every aspect of God, that none can successfully protest it. That is the point of a challenge that will be hurled at the doubter in the

eighth chapter. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom 8:33-34).

God has not simply saved men by Divine decree, oblivious of His own character and word. He has taken care to save us in a righteous manner. How else could salvation be the cause of glory being brought to Him? Those who boast of salvation being according to God’s sovereignty have only told part of the story. It is consistently represented as being according to His mercy and grace, and that is what brings Christ Jesus into the picture. Christ’s death has allowed God to be righteous in extricating men from sin, rather than punishing them for it. How wonderful are the works of God!

### JUST AND THE JUSTIFIER

“... that He might be just, and the Justifier...” Other versions read, “so as to be just and the One who justifies.”<sup>NIV</sup> “That He Himself is righteous and that He justifies.”<sup>NRSV</sup> “That He might Himself be upright, and give righteousness.”<sup>BBE</sup> “He is entirely fair and just in this present time when He declares sinners to be right in His sight.”<sup>NLT</sup>

As indicated, the idea is that **God is RIGHT in removing the sin of sinners, and making the unrighteous righteous!** All of the Divine attributes have joined together in our salvation. As it is written, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa 85:10). Prior to Jesus, mercy and truth could not meet together. Mercy cried out for pardon, while truth demanded condemnation. Righteousness and peace could not kiss in holy embrace before the death of Jesus. Righteousness required that sin be punished. Peace longed for reconciliation. All of these traits were resident in God, yet could not work harmoniously for man’s salvation without an atoning death—a “propitiation.” Longsuffering stepped into the forefront, agreeing, as it were, to manage the dilemma until the Redeemer came. Mercy delighted in the arrangement, and truth was satisfied to wait. Peace found joy in the arrangement, and righteousness was content to wait until the “Sun of righteousness” arose with healing in His wings.

Thus, from beginning to end, God is declared to be righteous. He was righteous in passing over sin in anticipation of the atonement. He is righteous in delivering

men from sin. And He will be righteous in the condemnation of those who refuse to be reconciled to Him.

This, then, is the full scope of righteousness revealed through the Gospel. God Himself is shown to be right in the conferment of righteousness upon men who are, of themselves, unworthy. O, how this message needs to be heralded!

### OF THE ONE WHO HAS FAITH IN JESUS

God will not save everyone, even though He “desires all men to be saved

or (1 Tim 1:19), are not said to be justified. For such to be the case, God would have to deny Himself, for He has represented Himself as having no pleasure in such people (Heb 10:38-39).

While men debate whether it is possible to be lost once you are saved, the Scriptures declare that God is righteous in justifying the person who is believing in Jesus. Speculating about whether or not a person can fall out of favor with God is foolish. Adam and Eve experienced the favor of God, and also His disfavor. It is possible for “an evil heart of unbelief” to

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and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4). Men will not be saved by mandate, but by faith. They will not be saved in groups, but “the one who has faith in Jesus” will be justified, or pronounced righteous.

It is not the one who “has believed,” but the one who “has faith,” or IS believing, that is justified by God. God has nowhere committed Himself to justify those who “believe for a while” (Lk 8:13), “cast off their first faith” (1 Tim 5:12), or do not “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim 6:12). Those who “deny the faith” (1 Tim 5:8), make “shipwreck” of the faith,

enter into those who are appropriately called “brethren” (Heb 3:12).

But for those who will persist in believing in Jesus, availing themselves of His Person and ministry, God will surely “keep them from falling,” at last presenting them “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). God is greatly to be praised for remaining righteous in our salvation. God be praised that it is RIGHT for Him to confer righteousness upon those believing in Jesus! Now, make it your business to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ!

## CONCLUSION

### THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL

This text has opened the very heart of the Gospel of Christ. It has revealed what God has done about our sinful condition, and how He has done it righteously, and with the utmost regard for His own integrity. It is not only that men be made righteous, but that God remain righteous in the doing of it. I do not believe this is generally known in the Christian community—at least not much is being

said about it. Many people who profess to have heard the Gospel have never heard these things.

### MAN IS IMPOTENT TO CHANGE

We have also seen the utter impotence of man to change his moral and spiritual condition before God. God must change him, or he will not be changed. God must make him righteous, or he will never be righteous.

### JESUS IS NECESSARY

The necessity of the Lord Jesus has also been declared with power. Not only did we need a Savior, God the Father needed One upon Whom He could lay the sins of the world. He needed to punish sin. He could not ignore it. His nature would not allow Him to do so.

### BEYOND IMAGINATION

I do not believe there is a created

*The means through which God’s righteousness is received is a central doctrine of Scripture, by Given O. Blakely*

intelligence capable of imagining how God would save sinners. Had He not revealed this to us, even though its truth was couched in types and shadows under the Law, no man is capable of imagining it. Even after it has been revealed, multitudes of professed believers find it difficult to believe. That is how great the salvation is that is in Christ Jesus. It is appropriate that we are warned, "*How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation*" (Heb 2:3). The answer to that question should be obvious to you.

#### **APART FROM THE LAW**

Those with a penchant for law must be brought to see this righteousness is made known and conferred independently of Law. The Law and the Prophets witnessed to it, but could not bring it to pass. Sin has so blighted our race that we are incapable of pleasing God apart from faith in Christ Jesus. Were this not the case, there would be no need for Jesus, or for God to confer His righteousness upon us. It is imperative that men see this, and cease to depend upon Law for approval.

#### **BE ENCOURAGED**

I encourage to you to believe in Jesus—to trust in His atoning death, and the effectiveness of His blood. Do not take for granted that you have advanced sufficiently in this area. Jesus has accomplished more than we presently comprehend. He has brought salvation within your reach. His work has satisfied God, and there is no reason why it cannot satisfy you. God will honor you with righteousness if you will honor His Son. He is faithful to do this!

Our next Hungry Saints Meeting will be held on Friday, 6/2/2000. Continuing in our studies on Romans, we will cover 3:27-31, "BOASTING IS EXCLUDED." In salvation, all of the glory goes to the Lord. There is not a single aspect of salvation that allows for boasting in the flesh, or glorying in men. From beginning to end, our reconciliation is of God. Therefore, wherever fleshly boasting surfaces, spiritual blindness is thereby evidenced. Our meeting will convene at 7:00 P.M. You are invited to bring your family and friends for fellowship around the Word of God.

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