

The Righteousness of God, without the law, Manifested

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Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

- [0 : 00] We're going to sing now from Psalm 144. Psalm 144, again we're singing from the beginning of the psalm, down to the verse marked 8.
- Psalm 144, O blessed ever be the Lord, who is my strength and might, who doth instruct my hands to war, my fingers teach to fight.
- My goodness, fortress, my high tower, deliverer and shield, in whom I trust, who under me my people makes to yield.
- Lord, what is man that thou of him dost so much knowledge take, or son of man that thou of him so great account dost make?
- Man is like vanity, his days as shadows pass away. Lord, bow thy heavens, come down, touch thou, the hills and smoke shall they.
- [1 : 05] Cast forth thy lightning, scatter them, thine arrows shoot them rout, thine hand send from above, may save from great depths draw me out.
- And from the hand of children strange whose mouth speaks vanity, and their right hand is a right hand that works deceitfully.
- And so on. We can sing these verses. 1 to 8 to Psalm 144, O blessed ever be the Lord, who is my strength and might.
- O blessed ever be the Lord, who is my strength and might.
- Who doth instruct my hands to walk, my fingers to fight.
- [2 : 16] My goodness, fortress my high tower, deliverer, Lord, what is man that thou of him so great?
- With that thou of him so much knowledge take, For son of man that thou of him so great a call does make, Man is like vanity, his days as shadows pass away.
- Lord, bow thy hands, come down, touch thou the hills that smoke shall lay.
- Cast forth thy lightning, scatter them thine, and oh, shoot them round.
- Thine hand saith from above me, save from great depths, draw me out.
- [4 : 43] And from the hand of children's gracious mass speaks vanity.
- And their right hand is a right hand that works deceitfully.
- Amen.
- Being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.

For there is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. and so on but now the righteousness of God is out of the law manifested when I was a student in the church college as it was then the student body would meet as a theological society and as such they had a committee that would organise visiting theologians to come and speak to us for sometimes an hour on three or four days of the week just an annual thing if my memory serves me and one of the speakers that was invited on one occasion was the renowned theologian preacher teacher writer

[7:17] Don Carson and he was at that time a regular speaker in various universities universities and he would address the student body of universities and universities were not the best of places for hearing theologians speak to them some who would meet and listen to the visiting theologian would meet for the simple reason that they wanted to engage in some kind of debate and usually they were antagonistic to whatever theological position was set before them but Carson was saying that the difficulty many of them had if they had any difficulty with theology was not so much the kind of theology where you set before the doctrines the fundamental doctrines of the

New Testament justification adoption whatever that that great difficulty was with the idea of sin they did not and would not accept easily the teaching concerning sin and what Carson said was this the only absolutely wrong thing is to say that there is such a thing as an absolutely wrong thing there was no standard by which they were willing to be assessed and I think that works out or it breaks down into

Stuart's opinion is equally valid as mine is equally valid if that's not the right way of putting it but if you have an opinion then it's your opinion you're quite right to hold it as I am quite right to hold mine if it is a contradictory viewpoint and what Carson observed was this somebody who was a theologian somebody who frequently preached the gospel he said that kind of mindset eventually has a bearing on gospel preaching because he said if we cannot agree with what the problem is we cannot possibly agree as to what the solution is understand what he said fundamentally the preacher of the gospel presents a scenario a biblical scenario before the congregation or the body of hearers and it is presenting the picture that God himself has drawn for us in the world that the world is fallen and that it lies in sin and that sin needs a remedy and the sinner needs salvation and if that is the case then you have to ask the question what is the remedy who is my saviour and the gospel provides the answer

God has provided the remedy and Christ is the saviour GP now many people today even those who are under the gospel may be presented with a case that they have to answer but because they have a very shallow understanding of sin if they understand it at all their appreciation of salvation is at the very best flawed now without question the gospel of Jesus Christ meets the need of unfallenness and I'm sure you appreciate as I appreciate if we do not appreciate the extent of our fallenness we will not appreciate the perfections of the provision that God has made in Christ Jesus here in this passage Paul has said we have all sinned

Jew and Gentile without exception doesn't matter what your creed is what your creed was we're all in the same boat all have sinned and come shocked of the glory of God we are guilty in this the eyes of God and that is how things are now in the immediate context the consequence of that is made plain in verses 19 and 20 now we know that what things whoever the law saith it saith to them who are under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may be become guilty before God therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight for by the law is the knowledge of sin this is the thing the presence of sin exposes them to the power of sin and the penalty of sin but it is more it is required more than me simply telling you that you are a sinner in need of a saviour for that to be brought home to you with the conviction necessary to appreciate what the provision is all about if you think for a moment about

[14 : 29] David the king David the king understood that he was a sinner I'm sure he spoke about his sin and he acknowledged his sin but there was one sin in particular of which he was guilty and yet it appears that that guilt was lost to him he didn't appreciate it for what it was either he overlooked it or he he deliberately chose not to think about it until by the hand of God he was brought face to face with the reality of that sin so a psalm that is identified with his experience of discovering the heinousness of that sin begins with these words after thy loving kindness

Lord have mercy upon me and he understands that the mercy of God is entirely due to God's mercy God's loving kindness but what accentuates that to him what makes that real to him is the fact that it is out of God's compassion out of God's loving kindness that he is he is dealing with him as a sinner prepared to deal with his sin blotting out all his iniquities if you're not aware of your iniquity if you're not aware of your sin the fact that God is willing to blot it out is not really meaningful to you but the moment the spirit of God comes into your experience and probes the heart and exposes what lies in the heart and as the heart is exposed to the probing of God so appreciation comes for what is necessary in order for that to be overcome and one of the the books that records the history of the church there's accounts given to us of the practices of the church in generations it was still pretty much existed in my young years where if a person committed a sin that was public there was the practice of of bringing that person before the congregation of God's people and making that person stand and their sin was described or spoken of from the pulpit to bring shame into that person's experience and

I think in the days of it was still ongoing but it came to an end I suppose with good reason but in Robert Murray McJane's day he was addressing somebody like that whatever the sin was he pointed to the man who stood in front of him and he said oh he says you're a black man black because of your sin but he says whatever you're like outside it's nothing like your blackness in in the soul in the heart now that at the time it wasn't it wasn't simply to embarrass a person or to make a person feel sorry for himself but rather to make a person understand the extent of the sin that was in his heart but you know the point I'm trying to make is this that if God wants us to appreciate our sinfulness it is in order for us to appreciate his willingness to deal with our sin and to deal with it meaningfully and to deal with it with the absolute conviction on our part that that has been done to the fullness to the extent that our sin is no more or our sin has been expunged or dealt with now as we said David made a personal statement it could be a corporate statement as well but here what

Paul is concerned with is that we understand as the reader understands that the law which some look at in order to justify themselves was not meant for their justification it was meant to accentuate their guilt it was meant to highlight their sin it was meant to help them understand the nature of their sin the law was not a means of justification it was not what they applied to and said well I will do this that and the other thing and by so doing I will justify myself before God Paul says that's not the purpose for which the law was given it brings sin to light as well as the guilt that belongs to it so from verse 21 to 26 you can you can see how he means to consider the provision that God has made in the passion of

Jesus Christ through the gospel I want us to focus most narrowly on verse 21 and we can't do that I suppose in isolation it is followed by an explanation of what he means us to understand but now he says the righteousness of God without the law is manifested that but now has caused some debate amongst the theologians because they want to understand what the now is what it signifies is is Paul here describing to us a time is the now of which he is speaking a moment in history or a point in history or a season in history unlike that which has occurred before so that there is some movement from what was there before to what is now to take place and there are some theologians and that's how they've understood these words they've looked at the Old

[22 : 18] Testament dispensation and the justification of the Old Testament saints which they reckoned belonged to a form of understanding of the law and their obligation to it their obedience to the law that allowed them to consider themselves as justified saints but now because of what God has done in Christ Jesus the New Testament saint is at an advanced or a better position to appreciate what justification is now that's a misapplication of what Paul is teaching it's a misunderstanding of what Paul is teaching the saints of the Old Testament were justified justified in what way they were justified by faith in Jesus

Christ in the same way that the New Testament saint is justified by faith in Jesus Christ they were not justified by reason of their law works in the same way that the New Testament saint cannot consider himself or herself justified by reason of their law works if you look at the Old Testament saints what they anticipated what they envisaged happening was God's word by way of promise being fulfilled they looked towards the Saviour Jesus Christ they looked towards a mediator that God would provide they looked towards a Messiah who would come the Prince of Peace and however clearly they saw him that was who they looked to no doubt there were law works but it was not upon the basis of their law works that they believed that their salvation depended

R.C. Sproul speaking about Abraham Abraham a favourite topic of the Apostle Paul even here in this epism he says he could see at a distance the day of Christ Jesus but it was vague and veiled through distant promises but now that promise has been fulfilled for the atonement of Jesus Christ has been offered so there is a difference in the sense that historically there's been progress but as far as salvation is concerned and what is to deal with sin is concerned it is to be understood that there is more clarity on the part of those who are able to look retrospectively at what

Jesus has done rather than look prospectively with what he is yet to do the thing is it is not different in the sense that it is better than what earlier saints believed in that is not the point that Paul is making you're more familiar I'm sure with John Murray he's got a very precise way of reasoning in his commentaries on the book of Romans he says the following Paul expressly reminds us that this righteousness of God now manifested was witnessed by the law and the prophets he's not talking about a different righteousness the same righteousness that was previously prophesied it was witnessed it was declared by the saints of the

Old Testament but not a different one not a better one but the same one God has revealed the righteousness of his making upon which the believer can rely and that's what Paul wants us to understand that's what he wants us to behave in regard to the righteousness of God without the law is manifested being witnessed by the law and the prophets even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all that believe for there is no difference now maybe you're thinking well that's old doctrine and it is unnecessary to go over old ground but I would argue that it is the most necessary ground to go over and over again in your mind because of the simple reason that by nature we are always inclining towards our works righteousness that we have in some way been claimed responsibility to because most

[28 : 26] Christians who suffer from declension do so because they have departed from the appreciation that they should have of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ which is made their own through faith or those who suffer from disappointment by their own failings and that disappointment becomes a created grief which challenges their actual standing in the faith because there is so much depending upon it one of the older saints said the rags and tartars of a home spun self righteousness can afford no protection against the holiness of God and you can understand that from the point of view of somebody who is depending upon it but when we succumb to the desire to go back to that kind of homespun self righteousness then we find how tattered it is and how bare it is and how lacking it is of cover when we become exposed to the holy gaze of

God but they that have seen what God has provided bear testimony to that was not restricted to the saints of the Old Testament it might appear to us as we read here now the righteousness of God without the laws manifested being witnessed by the law and the prophets you'd think well that was their role in the past it is our role in the present it is our role in the here and now that we magnify the name of God for the provision that he has made for something that is there's nothing like it this righteousness of God or as some have it this righteousness from God is what belongs to every believer without exception whoever the believer is wherever they belong in the world whatever their former experiences were if they have come to faith in

Jesus Christ this is what covers their nakedness the righteousness imputed to them by faith in Jesus Christ we know that God is just we know that God is holy we know that God is righteous and I suppose based on that some people would inquire as to the righteousness that is spoken of here now the righteousness of God without law is manifested what does that mean what righteousness is referred to there and some have taken it to mean that the God righteousness of which the passage speaks as a righteousness that is part of the character of God part of the being of God and that is what our salvation builds upon but that is not what Paul is saying theologians require us to believe that what belongs to the divine nature can never be considered the ground of justification to a fallen mankind what is

God's in that sense is not the foundation upon which your justification or my justification rests can't remember which one of the theologians says if you want to understand that you understand it in this respect that it is the righteousness of God a holy God a just God a God that is sinless that is the righteousness that makes you sin sin that is the righteousness that condemns you that's the righteousness that brings home to you your guilt it's not the righteousness that justifies you where do you find that well in the words of

Macdonald who is in Ferintosh he says the righteousness of the divine nature is what reveals the divine indignation against sin but what deals with that sin is the righteousness that is worked out by Christ Jesus the Lord the one who fulfills all righteousness the one who kept the law and who exalted the law the one who answered to the broken law by suffering in the room and the place of his own people what Jesus did as a righteousness he did it vicariously he did it not for himself but for others for the elect of God in particular and that's what Paul means to convey now the righteousness of God without the laws manifested being witnessed by the law and the prophets even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus

[34 : 59] Christ and do all and upon all that believe for there is no difference and that's where the emphasis must lie that's where we find satisfaction the more we gaze upon the provision of God in the person of Jesus Christ and we contemplate this perfect righteousness nothing that well you well how can we how can we compare ourselves to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ how can we stand alongside him and say well these are my best endeavours what are they they're nothing but that what would put you to shame as for his obedience to the revealed will of

God to the whole of God's requirements in law all of them he fulfilled perfectly he took delight in so doing when you think of God's law as you are under God's law there is much of it that you do never perfectly but almost always with with a measure of half hearted willingness you do it because you are required to do it never as you should and very often with with with reluctance you can never say that of the Lord Jesus he delighted in doing God's law and he fulfilled the law everything that was required of him and not only did he do that as we see him as our sin bearer we see somebody who suffered and died for a broken law not one of the sins was his but the sins that he made his own by reason of of who he was the great sin bearer of God the righteousness as one

Puritan put it the righteousness of justification is the God righteousness of the divine Christ himself which is imputed and reckoned to us the moment we place our trust in him later on in chapter 5 Paul says therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God whatever a church can afford to lose sight of they can never afford to lose sight of this they can never afford to say we've heard it all before and there's nothing new that we need to hear again that's not the case we need to remind ourselves again and again of the impeccable nature of the provision of God in the person of Jesus

Christ in so far as the justification of sinners is concerned and all have sinned and come short of his glory but those who have by faith closed in with him they are assured that their sins are dealt with completely well may he bless to us these few thoughts let us pray have a blessed God we give thanks for the provision you have made for us in the passion of Jesus Christ that he became sin for us that we might know the salvation redemption redemption the sanctification that all he has done would make our own cleansing from the many sins that are ours go before us in Jesus name amen go before sing now in gaelic from psalm 72 psalm 72 at verse 12 and sing three verses geht amen h Plaza

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