

The Righteousness of God

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[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let us turn back to the portion of scripture that we read together, the epistle of Paul to the Romans, chapter 3, and we'll read at verse 21.

This passage really goes on from verse 21 to 26, but this evening we're going to focus on verses 21 to 23.

But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it.

The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe, for there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Now, as I've said, these verses belong to the larger passage down to verse 26.

[1 : 18] And this passage, Martin Luther called it the chief point and the very central place of the epistle and of the whole Bible.

In this passage, you will see that there is one particular phrase that stands out, repeated in verse 21, 22, 25, and 26.

And that is the phrase, the righteousness of God. Now, this is something which the apostle Paul had already hinted at in the first chapter and in verse 17.

And what he is going to do now is he is going to elaborate upon it. And he is going to show how the righteousness of God empowers the gospel to give the hope of salvation to sinners like myself and yourself.

It gives us a hope that we can be delivered from the consequences of sin. Up to this point, in his letter, the apostle has been looking at the sad story of sinful mankind.

[2 : 54] He has been telling us how sinners are under the wrath and condemnation of God. He brings before us the hopelessness state of sinners.

Paul has, up to this point, established beyond any doubt that no man, no person, has ever been or will be able to justify themselves before God.

No man or person has ever provided or ever will provide a righteousness that will satisfy God's justice.

No person has ever or ever will be able to provide a righteousness that will meet the demands of God's most holy law.

Therefore, we can ask ourselves, is there any hope? Is there any hope for the sinner?

[4 : 09] Is there any hope for the person who is under the wrath and condemnation of God, who cannot justify themselves, who cannot restore that relationship with God that was broken by sin?

Is there any hope for the sinner? Well, here the apostle brings before us a turning point.

And he begins by saying, But now, the righteousness of God has been manifested.

In the darkness of mankind, there comes this shining light, this turning point.

But now, he says, the righteousness of God has been manifested. And in this context, what Paul is speaking of is something that God has done to provide for the salvation of sinful man.

[5 : 33] God has done something to provide for the salvation of sinners.

Sinners who couldn't justify themselves before God. Sinners who were under the wrath and condemnation of God. Sinners who couldn't work a righteousness that could undergo the scrutiny of God's holiness.

Man, the sinner, in a pitiful, sorrowful, sad state.

In a hopeless state. But God, God has intervened. And God has done something to provide for the salvation of sinful man.

We can just, for a moment, perhaps visualize this in the experience of Adam.

[6 : 42] When Adam sinned and lost and fell from that relationship that he had with God, was a very dark day.

And I don't think I would be wrong in saying that it was probably the darkest day that ever came upon our world.

Because he knew what he had done. But as I thought up to that moment, all he knew was what God had said.

In the day that thou shalt eat, thou shalt die. He knew that the fellowship and communion with God had been broken.

And what was there to look for? Well, Adam could only look for the sentence that God had pronounced upon if he sinned, if he rebelled, if he took of the fruit of the tree and sinned against God.

[7 : 56] It was a dark period. Until God intervened and gave the promise.

the promise regarding the seed of the woman. Light shone into the darkness. And that is what we have here.

That is what Paul is bringing before us in his letter here. He is showing the darkness of man's experience. Man in a hopeless state.

Man is a sinner before God. But now he says the righteousness of God has been manifested. Light has shone in to that darkness.

Light has penetrated that darkness. God has intervened into that darkness. God has done something to provide salvation for sinners.

[9 : 00] And if God had not done this, man's position would be hopeless. Man would be as Paul puts it in his letter to the Ephesians without hope and without God in this world.

But now things are different. There is hope because of what God has done and what God has revealed.

there is hope now for the sinner. Just as there was for Adam when God gave the promise, there was hope and Adam exercised faith upon the promise and received salvation.

salvation. And so for me and you tonight, there is hope because of what God has done and revealed.

When Paul says, but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, it is clear that he is contrasting there, there was this earlier declaration in his letter when he said, for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

[10 : 32] But now he says, the righteousness of God is made known. And this is the single way of salvation from the wrath to which our sin has subjected us.

There is only one way of salvation and it's not a man-made way, but a God-made way. And this is the folly of those who try to make their own way of salvation by their own works and try to work up a righteousness that will be accepted by God when God says all our own righteousness are us filthy rights.

There is only one way of salvation from the wrath to which our sin has left us open and that is the way that God has made, the God made way of salvation.

Now as I said this passage is really down to verse 26 and we can break it up like this just to give you a flare of what is here before us.

It falls really into four parts. Paul restates what he had already said in chapter 1 verse 17 regarding the gospel where he said for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.

[12 : 05] And now he relates it to the Old Testament but he says but now the righteousness of God apart from the law although he says the law and the prophets bear witness to it.

Then in verse 22 to 23 the apostle focuses on the way in which all human beings are equal in their sin but also they have equal access to God's righteousness through faith.

He says the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe for there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Then in verse 24 to 25 the apostle brings before us the source of God's righteousness is the gracious provision that he has made of giving Christ as the atoning sacrifice.

For he says and are justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Justified by his grace. It is all of grace.

[13 : 27] All of grace. Justified by his grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith.

And then in the latter part of 25 and verse 26 the apostle shows how the atonement not only provides for the justification of the sinner but also demonstrates that God is just. Throughout the whole process it shows how God has dealt with the sins of the Old Testament saints. He says whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith this was to show God's righteousness that God is just for he forgives the sinner and it also shows us what he did with the sins of the Old Testament saints. He says this was to show God's righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time so that he might be just and the justifier the one who has faith in Jesus. How was Adam forgiven? [15:07] How was Abraham forgiven? How was Moses forgiven? How was David forgiven? Through the blood of Jesus Christ.

The same as the New Testament saint has been forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ. they believed in the promise and in the promise there was Christ and they believed in that Christ who was to come and who was going to be given as the true and only sacrifice that could take away sin. When the saint of the Old Testament offered to sacrifice he did not think that the blood of bulls and of goods was going to give him forgiveness of sin going to reconcile him to God he knew that was only a shadow that it spoke of something much higher and something in their eyes that was to come in our eyes it is something that has come and that has been accomplished but for them it was something that was still to be accomplished and they exercised faith upon that promise and they were saved saved in Christ the same way as I am saved and the same way by which you are saved and that is what the apostle brings before us here as he comes to the end of this passage verse 21 to 26 we notice there in verse 25 and 26 just in passing that the apostle uses the term God's righteousness whom God would form as a propitiation by his blood to precede by faith this was to show God's righteousness and then in verse 26 it was to show his righteousness now I think there is to be a distinction made there from what we have in verse 21 22 when he speaks of the righteousness of God because there in the passage that we're going to focus on or that we have been focusing on verse 21 to 22 he is making reference to the justifying act of God while in verse 25 and 26 he is making reference to the integrity of God for God always acts in complete accordance with his own character when God forgives you he is just in forgiving you when he forgives me he is just in forgiving me when he forgives his people he is just in forgiving his people it is if he forgives sin it is because he is in his nature merciful all the acts of God's will are the effects of his nature he is merciful because he is in himself merciful when God wills to forgive sin it is because he is in himself infinitely without measure gracious good and merciful him this graciousness of God's nature is the root from which forgiveness comes it comes because he is in his nature merciful he delighteth in mercy

James Denny in his book on the death of Christ writes there can be no gospel unless there is such a thing as a righteousness of God for the ungodly but just as little can there be any gospel unless the integrity of God's character be maintained the problem of the sinful world the problem of all religion the problem of God in dealing with a sinful race is how to unite these two things how can he forgive my sin how can he forgive my sin and yet remain righteous how can he forgive my sin and yet remain just well the answer is given by Paul and it's given here is it not where he says regarding Jesus Christ whom God put forward as appropriation by his blood to be received to be received by faith but now he says but now the righteousness of God has been manifested these words are reference to time for what the apostle is emphasizing here is that something has taken place recently that has changed everything but now he says something happened in recent times that has changed everything from chapter 1 verse 18 to chapter 3 verse 20

[21:01] Paul has been bringing before us the sad story of man's helplessness to escape God's wrath and how sinful man is justly condemned by God how he's under the curse how he's under the condemnation of God how he's under the wrath of God but says Paul now something recently happened but now he says God has intervened and Paul's used this change from the standpoint of time or of history with reference of course to the coming of Jesus Christ his incarnation his life his death his resurrection everything to do with this person of Christ it has changed everything but now he says something happened recently something has happened that has brought about hope for the hopeless that has brought about hope for the sinner that has brought about the gospel the good news that is why Paul says

I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth to the Jew first and also to the Greek for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith as it is written the just shall live by faith this is the righteousness that I need as a sinner that you need as a sinner or else you're lost we need this righteousness a righteousness that we cannot provide ourselves but a righteousness that God has provided in his mercy in his love in his grace he has provided a righteousness for a sinner like you for a sinner like me for one who rebelled against him he

God has provided a righteousness is that not good news is that not the heart of the gospel is that not why we have confidence in the gospel in going out with the gospel it is all because of God's intervention it is as Paul says it is his gospel it is God's gospel it is God's good news that he has provided a righteousness a righteousness provided by God a righteousness prepared by God a righteousness that is made available by God but now he says the righteousness of God what man and especially the Jews have been trying to produce a righteousness that would satisfy a God you see the Jews thought that they were doing it their morality and law keeping and here in these chapters

Paul says that is all in vain you see Paul himself thought he was doing that Paul thought he was working out a righteousness if you look at Philippians chapter 3 and verse 4 to 9 and you can look at it yourselves and there you see what Paul says of himself until one day he had an encounter with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus and everything changed everything changed he says those things that he counted as things that would provide this righteousness he says it was but dumb it was but rubbish it was but rubbish oh he says that I may win Christ and be found in him not having mine own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through the faith of Christ the righteousness which is of God by faith on the road to Damascus this light shone of what God had done and it changed Paul's perspective on everything on his own life on everything he had thought he had been doing in order to gain this righteousness with God he says it's all rubbish it's all rubbish oh that I may he says win Christ that I may have this righteousness which God has provided through his son and it was the same realisation that brought an end to Martin Luther's spiritual struggle when he discovered that the righteousness of God could mean only the righteousness by which God is righteous in himself but also the righteousness by which we are made righteous by God Paul he allays emphasis that this righteousness that we need is provided by God and I think it would be good for me and you always to remember that that what we need and it's given to us is something provided by God's grace

[27 : 04] God has provided a righteousness he promised it before but now he has revealed it he has made it manifest it is God himself who has provided this righteousness or way of salvation and he has provided this through his son the Lord Jesus Christ the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ justified by his grace as I give through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood to be received by faith it is a righteousness revealed to us a righteousness that God has provided he has provided this through his son Jesus Christ and is that not what you are preparing yourselves for as you are rising up to fulfill the

Lord's command to remember his death until he comes remember the cost of your salvation remember the cost of providing this righteousness is through the death of Jesus Christ through the shedding of his blood important for us yes to remember that our salvation or redemption that the entire action is from God God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself when we come to contemplate at the cross remember that the trinity is at the cross Jesus the son is on the cross in human nature the spirit is upholding the son and at the same time the father is also present and there is there is a mystery with the father's presence presence at the cross as he there deals with the son as a judge and yet he is the father he is pouring out what my sins and yours deserve on the son and yet he loves the son you see love and wrath is not contradictory love and hate is the opposite but love and wrath is not opposite it's not contradictory you can be angry with a member of your family and still you love them

God was angry with his son but still he loved him and perhaps if it is not too much to say perhaps he didn't love him ever as he did at that moment I'm not sure if that's right to say or not but you can understand what I mean as the son is giving himself in obedience to the will of the father even when the father is pouring out his anger for the sins that he is very not his own but my sins and yours my sins and yours it is God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son it is God who delivered him up and spared him not on the cross of Golgotha Peter in his first epistle reminds us

that the whole object of the work of Jesus Christ was to bring us to God for Christ also hath once suffered for sins the just for the unjust that he might bring us to

God and here Paul reminds us that it is a God providing righteousness that is now made available for me and you and he says that this righteousness has been manifested apart from the law apart from the law he says well what does he mean by that well there are those who say that God has gone away with the law altogether and that Jesus came into the world that the law ceased to be of any significance once Jesus came that the law was no longer of any significance they say that until Jesus came and did his work that man was judged according to the law but that it is no longer the case they say what judges man now is not the law of God but his response to the gospel his response to Jesus Christ they say that because man failed to keep the law of God that God as it were brought in something much easier and that judgment is now wholly based on whether we believe on the

Lord Jesus Christ or not well that cannot be true verse 31 do we then overthrow the law by this faith by no means he says on the contrary we uphold the law we must never say that the law has disappeared or been cast aside what then does it mean but now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law it means that our attempting to keep the law perfectly ourselves as the means of salvation or the means of righteousness has been entirely set aside not because the law no longer applies but because another yes Jesus Christ has rendered this perfect obedience to the law as how represented on our behalf God's righteousness is now attained without any contribution from us at all in keeping the law it is the righteousness of Christ that is imputed to us the righteousness of another

[33 : 33] Paul has made clear and stated up to this point that the law has failed to rescue the Jews from the power of sin because compliance with its demands to the extent that was necessary for a person to be justified has not and cannot be met by man our inability to attain righteousness by keeping the law but God has now provided this righteousness for us through his son Jesus Christ he has intervened to deliver us from the condemnation that the law justly has upon us the law of God is still there and it is still the means of judgment and there is no conceivable standing in the presence of God without a righteousness that answers the demands of that law and that's how we stand before

God clothed in the righteousness of Christ and so God can look upon us the man the person who is of pure eye than to look upon us and how can he look upon me and you only as those who are clothed as it were with the righteousness of Christ he says that this was although he says the law and the prophets bear witness to it well we don't need to go into detail on that if you go through the Old Testament the sacrificial worship and all these other things the promise that we spoke of Genesis 3 15 and so on well they defined how the law and the prophets bore witness to this righteousness of God and that's interesting is it not because as Abraham offered his sacrifice or Moses offered his sacrifice you know that I was upon this righteousness of God as we're going to be provided by the seed of the woman

Jesus Christ it bore witness to that and it goes on and he says the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe for there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God Paul highlights faith as the means by which God's righteousness becomes or can be applied or imputed to the sinner to me and to you it is only through faith that we can receive it only through faith God's righteousness is available only through faith in Christ but it is available to anyone who has faith in Christ it is available here he says to Jew and Gentile there is no distinction no distinction the well of man and the beggar and the man in the gutter tonight this righteousness is available to them to them all through faith in

Jesus Christ what does faith mean well there are three elements in faith a knowledge of truth is the first element in faith the second element is an ascent to truth you accept the truth you accept what has been said now you can have both these and still be lost people who are under the gospel has a knowledge of truth they may accept what has been said they'll tell you yes I accept that there was a man called Jesus yes I accept that there was a cross at Golgotha I accept that the man died buried and that he rose again I accept all that and yet be lost you see there's a third element and the third element is what makes faith a saving faith and that is trust in the truth a knowledge of truth is necessary an acceptance of the truth is necessary but to be saving there must be a trust in the truth that is set before you it is a real trusting in what

Jesus has done on our behalf and for our salvation it is looking away from ourselves that's what faith is looking away from ourselves and looking exclusively to the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished work Paul tells us why this righteousness is available to all and why all needs this righteousness for there is no distinction or basic difference among people with respect to their standing for God for he says all have sinned and fall short of God the glory of God well what a wonderful thing then salvation is it gives me a righteousness with which I can appear before God because if I have faith in Jesus Christ and his perfect work then

[39 : 20] I am clothed with the righteousness of God it has been imputed to me and as such I can appear before God with all confidence and with all boldness what a wonderful thing salvation is but now he says the righteousness of God has been made manifest apart from the law although the law and the prophets bear witness to it the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe for there is no distinction for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and the continuance of this passage is something that I am sure you will meditate and perhaps you'll hear more about God in the atoning work of

Christ and the propitiation work of Christ is that not what you're rising up to remember what a wonderful thing salvation is what a wonderful thing the gospel is the good news of what God has provided what wonderful news is a better news in the world tonight than that God has intervened and that God has provided a righteousness for the sinner to save him from hell to save him from what his sins deserved is there better news than God's salvation and I'll just close with this Robert Haldane wrote a commentary on this book of Romans and this is what he says to that righteousness is the eye of the believer ever to be directed on that righteousness must he rest on that righteousness must he live on that righteousness must he die in that righteousness must he appear before the judgment seat in that righteousness must he stand forever in the presence of a righteous

God oh my friend what a righteousness a righteousness that my eye must ever be directed towards a righteousness that I must rest on that I must live on that I must die a righteousness with which I must appear before the judgment seat of Christ and a righteousness which I will ever stand with in the presence of a righteous God have you got that righteousness tonight has it been imputed to you by faith if you have my friend there is no one standing in a more glorious robe than you tonight with the righteousness of Christ hallelujah praise the Lord let us pray