

Romans Session 44 How to Be Right with God 2

Romans 3:21-25 (NASB)

²¹ *But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*
²² *even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;*
²³ *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*
²⁴ *being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;*
²⁵ *whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;*

The last time we were together, we talked about Paul's challenge to the Saints at Rome concerning living by righteousness. The Righteousness of Jesus Christ.

This Righteousness has as its source Jesus Christ Himself.

This Righteousness fulfills both the precept and penalty of God's Law under which all men stand judged.

This Righteousness is long in duration; it is for Eternity.

This makes this Righteousness different from any righteousness man may have or come up with.

He was completely without sin;

Hebrews 4:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ *For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin.*

1 Peter 2:24 (NASB)

²⁴ *and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)

²¹ *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

It is by His Righteousness that we are to live and to stand before God.

Now we need to understand more about this Righteousness, first of all it is a Righteousness apart from the Law, that is apart from any and all legalism.

Romans 3:21 (NASB)

²¹ *But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,*

But, here translates an adversative, indicating a contrast, in this instance a wonderful marvelous contrast, between man's total depravity, and inability to please God and God's own provision of a way to Himself.

Except for the introduction, this epistle has portrayed an utterly dark picture of man's wickedness and hopelessness apart from God.

In the Introduction Paul gave a brief glimpse of light when he spoke of the gospel, "*which is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*"

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from Faith to faith"; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith." (1:16,17)

Now after backing all sinful mankind, Jew and Gentile alike, into the totally dark and seemingly inescapable corner of God's wrath (1:18-3:20), Paul begins to open the window of divine grace that lets in the glorious light of salvation through the righteousness that God Himself has provided.

First of all, Paul says, the righteousness that God imparts to believers is **apart from the Law**. *NOMOS*, (*Law*) is used in the New Testament in a number of senses, much like its English equivalent.

In a negative sense, it sometimes refers to legalism, the strict, self-dependent trust in one's own efforts to perform to the level of divine morality

Luke 18:9-14 (NASB)

⁹ *And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:*

¹⁰ *"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.*

¹¹ *"The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.*

¹² *'I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.'*

¹³ *"But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'*

¹⁴ *"I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Then again sometimes it refers to the commandments and ceremonial rituals prescribed by God in the Old Covenant through Moses.

And sometimes it refers simply to divine standards in general.

Sometimes it refers to the entire body of Scripture that God has revealed before the time of Christ, what we now call the Old Testament.

Sometimes it is a synonym for a general principle or rule. In interpreting the New Testament, therefore, the specific meaning must be determined from the context.

Because they capitalize **LAW** in this passage, it is evident that the translator of the New American Standard Bible understood *nomos* to refer to God's divine revelation, either in the narrower sense of the Mosaic Law, or in the broader sense of the whole Old Testament.

But I believe that in this passage Paul primarily has in mind the sense of legalism, of men's attempt to become acceptable to God by means of their own human efforts.

But Paul's main point is the same, whichever of those senses he had in mind for **LAW**: he is declaring that the righteousness God gives to believers is entirely **apart from** obedience to any law, even God's own revealed law. God's Righteousness is in no way based on human achievement, or anything that man can do in his own power.

The Jews own scriptures did not teach salvation by obedience to God's law, much less by obedience to the many manmade laws and traditions that had been devised by the rabbis and elder during the several hundred years before Christ.

Nevertheless, members of the Jewish majority in Jesus and Paul's day place their trust in those man-made regulations, in fact, most of them had more faith in rabbinical traditions than in God's divinely revealed law in Scripture. Before his conversion, Paul was himself the epitome of Jewish legalism. (*Phil. 3:4-6*)

The spirit of legalism was carried over into the church by many Jews who had taken on the name of Christ. They were referred to as Judaizers, because they attempted to add to the gospel the legalistic requirements of the Old Testament, such as circumcision and obedience to the Sabbath laws.

Paul admonished believers in Colossae,

Colossians 2:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ *Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—*

He reminded the believers in Galatia;

Galatians 2:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ *nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.*

And later in the book;

Galatians 5:1-2 (NASB)

¹ *It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.*

² *Behold I, Paul, say to you that if you receive circumcision, Christ will be of no benefit to you.*

Galatians 5:6 (NASB)

⁶ *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love.*

And here in Romans Paul declared;

Romans 3:28 (NASB)

²⁸ *For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.*

Even under the Old Covenant, good works based on God's own standards were worthless as far as salvation was concerned.

Paul says that David also speaks of this,

Romans 4:6 (NASB)

⁶ *just as David also speaks of the blessing on the man to whom God credits righteousness apart from works:*

Psalms 32:1-2 (NASB)

¹ *How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!*

² *How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit!*

God holds before men the standards of His righteousness in order to demonstrate the impossibility of keeping them by human effort.

Because of that inability,

Romans 4:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ *for the Law brings about wrath,*

Galatians 3:10-11 (NASB)

¹⁰ *For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."*

¹¹ *Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, "THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."*

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)

⁸ *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;*

⁹ *not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

Philippians 3:9 (NASB)

⁹ *and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,*

So what are we seeing here/ that Righteousness with God can never be achieved by human effort.

But Paul now says that while man can never find righteousness on his own or within his own power, there has been a revelation by God of His righteousness to be found in Jesus Christ, that will make man right with God.

It is an eternal and divine righteousness, now manifested in Jesus Christ for all men.

Man does not need to die in his sins, there is a way made for him in Christ.

But to the natural man who want to please God on their own terms, this way provided by God has become an offense and he wants nothing to do with it. It becomes a devastating truth to him. it condemns him in his sin.

Paul will go on to explain more of this great salvation and redemption through the Righteousness of Christ in the chapters ahead.