

Chapter Thirteen

Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans

God's Righteousness Is Revealed In the Gospel

“¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16-17).

We cannot rush past verse 17 quickly. It is upon the statement of verse 17 that the rest of the epistle builds. Almost every statement Paul makes in this epistle from this point forward relates back to verse 17. The gospel details the revelation of God's righteousness in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

God is a righteous God. That means He always does what is right. He cannot sin (do what is wrong). Nowhere is the righteousness of God more evident than in what God did in Christ Jesus to redeem fallen mankind from the death clutch of sin. God's righteousness demands justice for sin crimes against God's holiness. God warned Adam of the potential consequence of disobedience. The consequence was a death sentence upon the sinner.

“¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: ¹⁷ But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17).

“Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4).

God's righteousness demands that the judgment He passed upon sinners be satisfied. The wages of sin must be paid. God cannot be righteous if He is not just. He cannot be just if the death sentence upon mankind is not executed justly. The gospel details how God accomplishes all of this and still provides salvation to “whosoever will.”

“¹⁹ Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. ²⁰ 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. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²² 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: ²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; ²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵ Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; ²⁶ To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:19-26).

As we go through the book of Romans, we will see how each doctrine relates to the righteousness of God. We will see how God's righteousness requires condemnation (1:18-3:20). We will see how God's righteousness is satisfied (propitiated) through the substitute sacrifice of Jesus Christ to open the door for man's justification (3:21-5:11). We will see how God's righteousness demands personal and practical sanctification in the life of all believers (5:12-8:13). We will see how glorification and consecration relate to God's righteousness (8:14-16:27).

Any proposed way of salvation that does not reveal the way Christ satisfied God's righteousness is not the gospel. Any message of salvation which does not answer every question relating to the righteousness of God is false. If God's righteousness is distorted or perverted in any way, the message is false.

An example of this kind of false teaching would be the heresy that man can be righteous enough to satisfy God's righteous demands. Another example is the heresy that religious works or religious rituals are able to restore man to a righteous relationship with God. According to Scripture and the true gospel, both are gross distortions of God's righteousness.

“⁶ I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: ⁷ Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. ⁸ But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. ⁹ As we said before, so say I now again, If any *man* preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6-9).

“¹⁶ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. ¹⁷ But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, *is* therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. ¹⁸ For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. ²⁰ I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. ²¹ I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:16-21).

“¹ Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. ² Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. ³ For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. ⁴ Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. ⁵ For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶ For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. ⁷ Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? ⁸ This persuasion *cometh* not of him that calleth you. ⁹ A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Galatians 5:1-9).

The central message of the gospel is the propitiation of God, not the justification of man. Propitiation is the satisfaction of God's righteous demand for justice. The justification of man is a by product of the propitiation of God.

The righteousness of God that is revealed in the gospel is that righteousness which becomes incarnate in Jesus Christ and righteously pays the “wages of sin” (which is the death sentence) for all mankind by being our sinless substitute on the Cross of Calvary. The gospel is not about how righteous or religious man can be, but about how God's love sent His Son from the glories of eternity to die the death of a condemned criminal to satisfy God's justice (death sentence).

When propitiation is the central message of the gospel, satisfying God's righteousness is the focus (not attaining to God's righteousness, which can never be done).

“But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6).

“¹⁰ As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: ¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. ¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. ¹³ Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: ¹⁴ Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: ¹⁵ Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: ¹⁶ Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: ¹⁷ And the way of peace have they not known: ¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:10-18).

God’s righteousness is revealed in the gospel “from faith to faith” (Romans 1:17). It was by the faithfulness (“faith”) of Jesus Christ in obedience to the will of God that reveals to us a God so righteous He would send His own Son to the Cross of Calvary to pay the wages of sin rather than compromise His righteousness in any way. “From faith to faith” deals with the imputation of God’s righteousness to the person who trusts in Christ and what He did to propitiate God. This is expanded on in Romans 3:22.

“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” (Romans 3:22).

“By faith of Jesus Christ” should be “by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ.” Jesus was faithful in doing what He was sent to do. Therefore, God was propitiated and the believing sinner can be justified and freed from the condemnation of sin. The believing sinner is also declared righteous in Jesus Christ. Through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ to the will of God and the substitutionary death of the Cross, He made available “unto all and upon all them that believe” the righteousness of God which justifies the believing sinner.

“The just (justified) shall live by faith(fullness)” (Romans 1:17). This is quoted from Habakkuk 2:4. We need to understand its meaning from that context.

“Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4).

The word translated “just” is from the Hebrew word *tsaddiyq* (tsad-deek') referring to a righteous person because he has been justified and vindicated by God. The word translated “faith” is from the Hebrew word *'emuwnah* (em-oo-naw') and refers to a person’s fidelity to truth and steadfastness in it.

The intent of the statement “the just shall live by faith” is that a person saved and justified by faith in Messiah and His propitiatory work is obligated to live a life of faithfulness. A person is not saved by living righteously, but if he is saved he is obligated to live according to the principles and precepts of the Word of God. The “just” are obligated to live righteously in that they are declared righteous in Jesus Christ. This is the same context in which it is used in Galatians 3:11.

“¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. ¹¹ But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith. ¹² And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. ¹³ Christ hath 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” (Galatians 3:10-13).

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1. Discuss why Romans 1:17 is a pinnacle verse in the book of Romans. _____

2. Discuss why the righteousness of God must be revealed before it can be said to be the true gospel. ____

3. Read Galatians 2:16-21. What is being referred to by the statement “for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain”? How does “righteousness come” and to whom does it come? _____

4. Read Galatians 5:1-9. Discuss the difference between the *imputation* of righteousness (Gal. 2:21) and the actual *impartation* of righteousness (Gal. 5:5). _____

5. Discuss why the central message of the gospel (and the book of Romans) is the propitiation of God, not the justification of man. Use Scripture to support your answer. _____

6. Read Romans 3:22. Discuss the meaning of the statement, “from faith to faith” in Romans 1:17. ____

7. Read Habakkuk 2:4. Discuss why the statement “the just shall live by faith” in Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 needs to be understood from the context of Habakkuk 2:4. _____

8. From your understanding of Habakkuk 2:4, discuss the meaning of the statement “the just shall live by faith” in both Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11 and the theological significance of that meaning to your life and your responsibilities as a Christian. _____

9. Discuss how understanding Romans 1:17 must be a springboard to the understanding of the balance of the book of Romans and the gospel itself. _____

