

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

PCC, 18 Jan 2004

Text: Romans 3:21-26

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.

Introduction

- All men are sinners and “by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified [*dikaioww*] in God’s sight” (v. 20). To be ‘justified’ is to ‘be righteous.’
- The ‘righteousness [*dikaiosuvnh*] of God’ or the ‘righteousness acceptable to God’ has been manifested.
- Paul tells us seven things about this ‘righteousness of God’ in a single breath:

1. God’s Righteousness come not by Law-Keeping

^{21a} *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested,*

- a. The righteousness of God cannot be obtained by the deeds of the law (cf. v. 28), nor can we add to it.
- b. If it were obtained by works, we are doomed.

2. God’s Righteousness without the Law is not New.

^{21b} *being witnessed by the law and the prophets;*

- a. It has always been so since OT times, but is now made clear.
- b. If we read the OT without pharisaical lenses, we will know this to be true. God’s righteous could never be obtained by keeping the law (cf. Jn 5:39).

3. God’s Righteousness is Obtained by Faith in Christ

^{22a} *Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of [i.e. ‘in’] Jesus Christ...*

- a. The law and the prophets are unanimous in testifying that the righteousness of God is obtained by faith in the Christ or Messiah to come.
- b. “Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel” (WSC 86). And we must remember: (1) This faith is merely an instrument, and not what justifies us; (2) We are justified by faith *alone* contra Roman Catholicism; and (3) This faith is not alone, but produces good works, contra Dispensational Antinomianism (cf. Jas 2:14).

4. God’s Righteousness is Given to All Believers

^{22b} *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;*

- a. Every sinner stands in need of the righteousness of God no matter how wicked or how moral they may appear to be, for all have fallen short of God's glory.
- b. All who believe in Christ receives justification (cf. Jn 6:37).

5. God's Righteousness is Given Freely

^{24a} *Being justified freely by his grace*

- a. Justification is given without condition. Actual personal righteousness is a fruit rather than condition of justification (Thus Luther: says *simul Justus et peccator*, "at the same time just and sinner.")
- b. God calls whom He will and justifies whom He wills sovereignly.

6. God's Righteousness was Paid for by Christ

^{24b} *through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: ²⁵ Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood,*

- a. We were sinners held in captive slavery by Satan, Sin and the Wrath to Come. But we were redeemed by the blood of Christ (1 Pet 1:19).
- b. Our sins were transferred to Christ. He paid for our sin. But at the same time, His righteousness is imputed to those who put their faith in him.

7. God's Righteousness is Declared in the Context of Justice

^{25b} *to declare his righteousness [i.e. justice] 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.*

- a. No body disputes that God can forgive sin (Mk 2:7; Lk 5:21; cf. Ps 32:1). But how can God forgive when He "will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex 34:7)? Does not his remission (i.e. passing over) of sins violate his justice?
- b. The Cross is the answer. God's righteous justice is vindicated on the Cross for those who are forgiven have their sins paid for. God is both just and justifier.

Conclusion