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# Romans

**But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, Romans 3:21**

After two chapters of laying out a defense against the possibility of man somehow being justified before God on his own merits, Paul now brings in words of amazing relief to the fallen soul. The word "but" is used to show the contrast between the case he has so meticulously laid out and the introduction of new evidence which can be submitted in man's defense. However, the new evidence is actually something "witnessed by the Law and the Prophets."

This term, the "Law and the Prophets" is used to indicate the entire body of Scripture known as the Old Testament. In other words this new evidence is not being introduced apart from Scripture, instead it has been continuously proclaimed throughout Scripture. The evidence is new to Paul's argument, not to the basis for it.

What he submits now is that "the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed." The law has done its job; it has revealed man's fallen and condemned state before God. There is no hope of being justified before Him without something "apart from" it, but there is in fact something apart from it. The necessary righteousness has been revealed and so we are taken right back to Romans 1:17 -

"For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'"

The faith is for "everyone who believes" the gospel of Christ (see verse 16). It is this act which brings the righteousness of God to fallen man. Now that this is understood, it is necessary to evaluate what this actually means. There is a sharp divergence of thought at this point between the ideologies of John Calvin and Jacob Arminius. Calvinism teaches that it is an imputed righteousness, whereas Arminius claims it is an imparted righteousness.

Imputation means to "ascribe" or "credit" something. This then would mean someone is counted as righteous, whether they actually are or not. Impartation signifies "to give" something. If righteousness is imparted, it would mean that the believer is infused with righteousness; they actually "become" righteous. To understand more clearly perhaps it is best to turn these two into statements of declaration -

Imputation: I believe the gospel and therefore I am counted as righteous.

Impartation: I believe the gospel and therefore I am righteous.

The body of evidence is that Christ's righteousness is imputed to the believer actually at this time, but that Christ's righteousness is imparted to the believer potentially, being actually reserved for a future time. Man is justified before God by faith in Jesus Christ, but he is not actually righteous at this time. He continues to sin after salvation (a good example of this in Peter is found in Galatians 2:13-16 and in Paul see 2 Corinthians 11:29).

However, Paul indicates that in God's mind we are both glorified (Romans 8:30) and seated in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 2:6) even though we are actually still on earth and living out our lives. What has been accomplished in the

eternal state is still future to us in our temporal reality. Hebrews 11:39, 40 is another set of verses which show us that this is so -

"And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us."

These things may seem like hair-splitting, but they are of great importance when thought through. Our current relationship with God, our ability to lose our salvation, our rewards and losses are all contingent on such issues. Having incorrect ideas concerning these things can only lead us down unhappy avenues in our Christian life and so it is good to get them right.

Life Application: Are you now righteous because of Christ's work, or are you counted as righteous because of Christ's work? Others are evaluating you and making their decisions about Christianity based on your attitude, and this is reflected in what you believe to be true. Don't think more highly of yourself than you should lest you fall and bring discredit upon Jesus' name.

**...even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; Romans 3:22**

It will help to understand this verse better by returning to verse 21 along with it -

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference...

"The righteousness of God" noted here is not a law-based righteousness in and of itself, although the law does play a part in it. Paul says it is "apart from the law" though, so this must be carefully considered. To us the righteousness of God is a faith-based righteousness. Paul has shown that all are under a sentence of condemnation because of the law (be it natural or Mosaic); we simply cannot measure up to what God has revealed to us.

However, Jesus could and did. He was born without inherited sin and He lived perfectly without ever violating God's law. Now, by faith in His work the righteousness of God is imputed to us. This goes back to the concept of being declared righteous simply by taking God at His word. This was the case with Abraham in Genesis 15:6 -

"And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness."

By simple faith in what seemed otherwise impossible, God declared Abraham righteous. This is the consistent theme throughout the Bible. God knows our weakness and so He asks for us to trust Him and His promises. When we do, "the righteousness of God" is revealed in us and it is based on faith in what Jesus Christ did.

Many translations state here "through the faith of Jesus Christ" instead of "through faith in Jesus Christ." Actually, it is possible to have the faith "of" Jesus Christ by faith "in" Jesus Christ and so either is possible. The phrase "faith of Jesus Christ" is in what is known as the genitive form. Therefore, this is speaking about Jesus' faith which He imparts to those who believe.

In order to understand this, we can go to Ephesians 2:8, 9 -

"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."

The grace and the faith combined are the gift of God and they are bestowed upon us because of the merits of Jesus Christ "to all and on all who believe." Simple faith is the key to reconciliation with God the Father and it is faith in the accomplished work of Jesus. What a great bargain!

This verse ends with "For there is no difference..." This thought continues on into the next verse, but the idea here is that there is no "distinction." Things can differ without having any real distinction. But there is more than just difference between Jew and Gentile and natural law and the Mosaic law; there is a distinction which is made - until Jesus enters the picture. When He does, all distinctions are set aside.

Life application: Today, take time to look back over your life - at the innumerable things you've done which are contrary to what is good. Little lies, secret faults of the heart, open rebellion - whatever it may be. Your sins have separated you from your God. And yet all of that is washed away, cleansed, and purified by Someone else's work, by simple faith in what He did. Think on this and give God the glory for the giving of His Son for you.

**...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,...** Romans 3:23

Guilty! Paul laid out a clear and concise argument demonstrating that all people, both Jew and Gentile, are under the same condemnation. There is no person who has attained to God's glory, either innately or through works, that can expect to be exempt from His righteous judgment.

Every person ever born was born through man who originally traces back to Adam. Thus, without even committing any misdeeds, we have already inherited his sin. As we are in a continuum of time which is ever moving forward, we cannot go back before Adam to reverse the fall. David's words from the 51st Psalm remind us that we were "sinful at birth."

And as shown, not only did we inherit sin, we have added sin upon sin thus further separating us from the glory of God. This verse today, taken in conjunction with John 3:18, clearly lays out our hopeless state -

"He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already,..." John 3:18

The following truths are revealed - 1) All people, Jew and Gentile alike, inherited sin which separates us from God. 2) Our inherited state condemns us. There is nothing we need to do to be condemned, it is a fact of our birth. 3) There is no way for us to improve our station before God; our works cannot please Him and only further condemn us.

Were it up to us, all hope of reconciliation and restoration would be futile. But as we've seen and as we will continue to see, God has done the work for us. He has restored the bridge over the chasm. He has worked salvation by Himself. All of it has been done by Him and all of it will glorify Him. It is Jesus, Jesus, Jesus! All hail the name of Jesus!

Life application: When you look at others don't forget today's verse, but instead remember it and use it as a tool to prompt you to tell them about Jesus. Without Jesus, they will never know peace and reconciliation with God, but will instead be eternally separated from Him. Your words and your actions toward them may have eternal consequences, so don't be silent about Jesus.

**...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,... Romans 3:24**

This thought ties directly back to verse 22. "The righteousness of God" is bestowed upon all who believe - both Jew and Gentile who alike are under the penalty of sin. Now, because of the grace of Jesus Christ, we are "justified freely." We, in other words, are treated as if we had kept the law and were perfectly righteous even though this isn't the case at all. Such is the nature of grace - it is unmerited favor granted to those who demonstrate mere faith in the work of Jesus.

Because it is by grace, we merit no favor at all in the decision; it has come "freely." The word here is the Greek *dorean* and it carries the intent of standing in opposition to anything which was purchased or earned through work or industry. No claim of personal effort can be made to that which was granted. Rather, all the honor and all of the gratitude is to be given to the One who bestows the grace - "To God be the glory." He has done it all for those who could do none of it. As the psalmist says, so we must say -

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us,  
But to Your name give glory,  
Because of Your mercy,  
Because of Your truth. (115:1)

We now stand justified and free from sin's penalty "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." The term "through the redemption" comes from a root word which indicates the price paid to redeem a prisoner of war. It signifies liberty from captivity, bondage, or imprisonment. We are born into sin and we are prisoners of sin, held in bondage by its power and are kept by the master of sin, the devil. This is confirmed by the devil's words to Jesus in Luke 4 where he stated that "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I

give it to whomever I wish." Sin is a firm bond and the devil is a cruel taskmaster. However, Jesus' mission was to destroy this power. John notes this as the principle reason for His coming -

"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." 1 John 3:8

Jesus prevailed where Adam failed. What the devil gained through Adam's disobedience, Jesus regained through His obedience. What God asks is that we simply believe this message, receive His gift, and place our trust in what Jesus has done for us. This is the "redemption that is in Christ Jesus." This is the marvel of what God has done for us. In Him there is absolute victory and complete reconciliation with God the Father.

Life application: Do you often feel defeated by sin's power? Jesus Christ has defeated the devil and broken the bonds which held us. We are now free from the power of sin, protected from the penalty of sin, and someday we shall be taken from the presence of sin - all because of Jesus. Take time to reflect on what He has done and then put your thoughts into action by standing on the freedom for which Christ has set you free!