

[Romans 3:22 – 31]

~ Our Spiritual Safari enters a new doctrinal section of Scripture in this report: one that explains the righteousness of God; what it is and how we can secure it in our lives. The simple answer for the only way righteousness can be attained is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is just that simple; but it is also just that complicated. In our previous report, we briefly considered what it meant to be righteous. We learned that righteousness means to be right; and that means to be right with God. But we can only be made right with God on His terms. God provides what we could never provide. And that is a reasonable summation of His righteousness. But there's so much more.

When we receive Christ's righteousness, we are still not righteous in the same way God is righteous; because we cannot provide others or ourselves that which God provides. We are going to have to grasp that statement if we ever hope to stand in His presence, my beloved. You and I cannot be saved by perfection because God demands perfection, but we cannot deliver. God cannot save us by imperfection because He is a Holy God, and He will not accept anything less. Therefore, if we are going to be saved, God is going to have to provide for our needs concerning righteousness. The righteousness God gives us can only be secured by faith that He is Who He says He is; and *never* by works....

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;

~ The righteousness of God obtained by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ comes unto all and upon all who believe. But there is no distinction amongst believers because all have sinned. We *all* fall short of being approved of God. Remember, the apostles asked Jesus. "... *how can we do works of righteousness?*" Jesus answered, "*this is the works of God; that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent.*" John chapter six at twenty-eight and

twenty-nine. This matter we call righteousness has neither to do with merit in our faith *nor* acts; nor in just believing because even faith is not a work on our part. The object of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, is what matters. He is *ALL* that matters.

Spurgeon, said, “... *It’s not the hope on Christ which saves you; it’s Christ! It’s not your joy in Christ that saves you; it’s Christ! It is not your faith in Christ that saves you; though that is the instrument - it’s Christ’s blood and His mercy!*”

Friends, that’s very important to nail down in your thinking. His righteousness is as a garment. It comes down to all; but only upon all who believe. Of course, it is available to everyone; but only believers can receive it. God makes salvation available to all who have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Now, someone asks if there is a difference between sinners? Here is a very homely illustration: as kids we used to play a game called jumping a mile. Each one of us tried to jump a mile; we all failed – there is simply no point to that game. You know, we had a great time playing it, but it meant that one of us were the best – at nothing....

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

~ The word “*freely*” is the same word Jesus used when He said, “*they hated me without a cause.*” It means they hated Him freely. There was no basis for their hate. Justified without a cause means there is no explanation within us for salvation. God never looks at me and you and says, “*Oh, My, aren’t they wonderful people – I must do something for them*” as He pats us on the back. That isn’t what God is about, friends.

Well, on the other hand, perhaps there’s something in *YOU* that would call out the grace of the Most High God; but there isn’t in me – other than my great need. That’s what we’re talking about. Grace is defined as “*an unmerited favor*” – someone has called it “*love in action!*”

This only happens *THROUGH* our redemption. Redemption is always connected with the grace of God, too. God can only save us because Christ redeemed us. Jesus paid the price of death for our sins. We were being held ransom by Satan. The demand for our release was Christ's death on the cross. Justification is more than a lessening of our sins; it is an addition to our righteousness in Christ! We're not merely restored to Adam's position in the garden before the fall; but we have been placed in Christ where we will be throughout the endless ages of eternity as sons of God!

Author John Bunyan was almost totally derailed in life. Many years were spent in distraction as he came to terms with being a sinner who had no righteousness of his own. See, we need to realize we are not *JUST* sinners – we *ARE* sin! From the top of your head to the soul of your foot you are *S-I-N!* Well, Bunyan struggled with the reality of standing in God's presence; even with them being forgiven. How about you?

The only way we can gain any type of standing before God regarding this problem is to turn to the apostle Paul; who was another great sinner, to be sure. He called himself the chief of sinners. Only when we accept this axiom can the burden roll off of our shoulders.

Philippians 3: 9 *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 ~*

If you read Bunyan's book, you're reading the story of his life. When pilgrim came with that unbearable burden on his shoulder in abject despondency, he had no idea what to do until he finally came to the cross where his burden rolled off. *THAT* is when he trusted Christ as his Savior. That is grace from which flow the living fountains of the waters of God.

Ephesians 2:4 *But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved) ~*

That means God has plenty of mercy. Dr Newell says that "grace" is "infinite love operating by infinite means." The sacrifice of Christ offers us

infinite freedom. This is so important to see. Only at this place of your understanding can you free yourself of the temporary strictures of the law. That is what allows a Holy God to reach down and offer salvation to whosoever will come; and that He will meet our needs and save us from our sins. It is wonderful to know God is free to save and see to those who trust in His Son! Everything connected to salvation is joyous and wonderful; infinite in extent. It is also unchangeable in character. All of this is available - but *ONLY* in the Lord Jesus Christ Who Alone could pay the price for someone as awful as *YOU* – and *me*, too. Peter said to the nation Israel, “... *neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other Name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.*” ~

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.

~ The blood of Jesus Christ speaks of His life. Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission for sins. Peter said the Blood of Christ was “precious.” Alright, verses twenty-five and twenty-six are jawbreakers with all kinds of theological words such as “*propitiation*” and “*remission.*” I suggest you look up the meaning of those words in a Bible dictionary. Our Spiritual Safari is going to put them in the test tube of faith and boil them down to the marrow of theology.

There is no statement I can find in the Word of God that sets forth more profoundly the righteousness of God than the following: “... *now God hath set them forth.*” God is the architect, builder, construction manager and owner of the project wrapped in one. All things are in God Who hath reckoned Himself unto us – and us unto Him – in His Son Jesus Christ.

God is speaking of His ministry of reconciliation in this passage; and all He asks of us is that we be reconciled to Him by faith. You don’t have to do anything to soften God’s heart. Many evangelists like to have people shed tears, ya’ know. I guess they never considered how many tears it might take

to soften Gods' heart! See, His heart is already soft. God is reconciled to you; be ye, therefore, reconciled to Him.

"Set forth" in verse twenty-five means to *"be displayed."* The tense this phrase occurs in points back to His death two thousand years ago. Christ has been *"set forth"* or *"displayed."* He is set forth to be our propitiation. When the high priest went into the Holiest of Holies, it was all private; but now that veil has been torn and we can see the mercy seat. The world can see it, too – it is accessible! It's all level ground at the foot of the cross, friends. Interestingly, we all know the cross is the popular symbol of Christianity. That's not an accident.

Propitiation means Christ is set forth as our Mercy Seat. Hebrews chapter nine verse five reads, *"... and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat..."* The Word we have for *"mercy seat"* is the same word as *"propitiation!"* Remember, the publican had been shut out of society because a publican couldn't go to the temple. There was no mercy seat for them. That's when the publican cried out, *"... God, be merciful to me; a sinner."* What he really wanted was access to the mercy seat. Well, our mercy seat is on display for anyone and everyone who honestly wants to see Jesus. That's wonderful to know. It's also mind-boggling how God can hold out a mercy seat to such an awful world. Come to Him today, friends; He is waiting for you with outstretched arms.

When we are saved, we no longer seek something or search out some other way. When we turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, we receive all we need. We can all thank God He holds nothing back from us. All God says is, *"come to Me and I'll accept you."* He also says that *"whosoever comes to Him He will in no wise cast out."* That's John chapter six at verse thirty-seven. You and I are completely shut out from a Holy God without Christ; just like the publican was.

Verse twenty-five says *"...sins of the past..."* And that does *NOT* mean your past sins and my past sins; this refers to those who lived before the cross. Remember, they had to take a little lamb to the temple to be killed; well, you don't take a lamb to church to be killed. If you do, that's blasphemy! The lamb pointed to the first coming of Christ; and no one in

that day felt that the sacrifice took away sins, either! If you had asked Abel if he thought that lamb would take away his sins, he would have told you, "no." So, we would ask him, "... then why did you bring it?" And Abel would have told us God required it in a command. Naturally, we would have said, "... I didn't read that in Genesis." And that's when Abel would have pointed us to Hebrews chapter eleven verse four which says, "... by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous...."

There's no other way, my beloved. Romans chapter ten verse seventeen reads, "... so then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The only possible way Abel could have brought his sacrifice was by faith – and he could never have had faith unless God told him to bring it. Abel would have told you that his mother had been promised a Savior, but they didn't know when; and, until that Savior arrives, they were to perform this ritual by faith. So, all the sins of the past were reconciled when the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross. God never saved Israel because of their sacrifices – not a single one – ever. Now, on this side of the cross, we don't bring a sacrifice. We are told to trust in His Blood....

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

~ You and I have so little to boast about that we can't even boast of the fact we're fundamental conservatives. Many of us seem to do it, but none of us have anything to glory in. This is the first instance of the law that is not restricted to the Old Testament; and Paul is dealing with a principle of law in this section of Scripture. Anything you think you can do or say will be thrown out of court as inadmissible evidence in your trial of self-righteousness. God simply will not allow you to present it. If that is your defense, you lose your case....

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

~ Well, Paul not only drives the final nails in the coffin of keeping the law as unacceptable to God for justification, but he bends them over with the hammer and clinches them by driving them into the wood. If justification is only by the law, then God belongs only to the Jews. If justification is by faith, then God is God of both Jew and Gentile! If the Jews prevailed in that argument, there would have to be two Gods. Do you think that's absurd? It's as absurd as trying to tell other people we are sinless! Interestingly, the Jew will not allow thinking that says there are two Gods. The Jew just happens to be monotheistic.

Deuteronomy 6:4 *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: 5 And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. 6 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart ~*

Romans chapter three -----

30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

~ Our safari ends this leg of our expedition with the declaration that there is only one God. In the Old Testament, God gave man the law; and man failed it. God didn't save them at that time through keeping the law. It was always the sacrifice that was demanded which pointed to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ that saved them by grace. Well, Paul isn't quite through with his legal argument in verse thirty and "...*establish the law*" does *NOT* mean the Mosaic System exclusively any longer; it refers to all of God's laws from here forward. The entire revelation of the Old Testament states faith excludes works of the law. Okay, we're going to need an entire report to get to the bottom of this doctrinal point.

From Abel to Abraham, the Old Testament saint was saved by faith and not law because they didn't even have the law. Abraham lived and died a full

four hundred years before the law was even given. It is impossible to place Abraham on the basis of the Mosaic Law; and do you really think David could have been saved by keeping the law, friends? Let's keep this real. That's preposterous. The Old Testament made it an inescapable fact that David broke the law. David was still saved, and he was saved by faith. What about you, friends? What will you do with Christ Who died for your sins? Will you get to know Him properly, correctly and completely by studying His Word? The answer to that question determines whether or not any of us shall rule and reign with Him ~