

The Righteousness of God

Romans 3:20~28, part 2 of 4

The Righteousness of God... In what is known as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made a statement.

²⁰*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

For many who heard those words... there must have been a sense of hopelessness... For the scribes and Pharisees “*represented*” the very elite of the Jewish faith! These men were by far the most knowledgeable and the most dedicated men in all of Israel, in the Jewish faith! They were the ones who taught the people, the ones who counseled the people, the ones who presided over the temple and its daily activities. They were the ones who established and enforced the Jewish law, the Law of Moses...

And knowing that, and looking to the statement that Jesus made about them, it even bears more weight.

²⁰*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

No doubt, the common Jew and Gentile, having heard such a statement, would be gripped with despair... For who can reach such a level as them, who can attain such a knowledge and understanding as the scribes and Pharisees... much less, EXCEED them...

But thanks be unto God... that Jesus didn't stop there... What appears to be such an “*unattainable goal*”, such an “*impossibility*” to attain, would prove to be easily attainable. For, the “*righteousness*” the scribes and Pharisees exemplified, **was NOT righteous at all**...

From 5:21~ the rest of the sermon, Jesus “*Clarifies*” TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS...

What seemed at first to be “*directed*” to the gentile in 5:20, now seems more directed to the scribes and Pharisees... Jesus takes the very law that they boasted in, and considered as their righteousness, and He clarified its true meaning. And in doing so, exposed them for what they were... SINNERS!

In a matter of minutes, Jesus brought the scribes and Pharisees down to the same level as the common folks... **Guilty sinners before God...**

Listening to His sermon, and realizing that even the “*elite*” of Israel had fallen short, no doubt the question among the crowd became... “Who is able to enter the kingdom of heaven?”

The entire point of Jesus' sermon... He wanted to bring his listeners to that very place, where each one of them would ask that same question. Because then, and then only, would they be ready to hear the gospel, the “*Good news of Jesus Christ!*”

Here in Romans 3, Paul speaks to the “*Righteousness*” that “*exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees.*”

²¹But now the righteousness of God... *The righteousness that justifies a man before God*...
...being witnessed by the law and the prophets... *The righteousness that His word speaks of*...
...without the law is manifested... *The Righteousness that has nothing to do with the Law!*”

A righteousness that can only be known and understood, in that of the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Jesus ...the Righteousness of God...

Tonight, my prayer to God, is that he would use our time together, to fulfill the last recorded words of Simon Peter...

¹⁸*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...
To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

I am learning more and more, that my task, each time I stand up here, is not to teach you the bible... It is not to tell you about God and Christ... My task is to Grow you in the Grace of God... and bring you into a more intimate relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ!

We find in verses 21~22, the *central focus* of Paul's letter... It is in these two verses that we find the heart and purpose of his letter! What he had began back in his opening statements, now comes full circle, back to his original point of 1:16~17... The "*Gospel of God*..." or the "*Good News of God*..."

²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. ²¹But 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:*

The "*Just*" shall live by faith...(1:17)...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. ¹⁷For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.*

Paul declares that the one who is "*justified*" before God, is the one who lives his/her life in submission, not to the law of God, but to the Son of God.

Now, as we pick up in verse 23, we will find that it is better understood combined with the latter part of verse 22...

...for there is no difference: ²³*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

I need you to listen very closely... I cannot begin to express the importance of having the right understanding of this verse... I want you to understand this verse in its entirety, *because of the implications* it will have on your worship of God, your love of God, your service to God, everything...

The statement in verse 23, is one I think has been misunderstood... at least for me that is true.

²³*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

(*Illustration of Archery*) The term "*Sinner*" is best defined as "*missing the mark*..."

The target represents "righteousness..." Mans being right with God...

The arrows represent religion

The bow represents man's skill, his attempts, his effort to hit the mark... to be right with God.

* I need to point out, that this illustration must be considered only in light of the fact, that Not one person on earth has ever "*hit the mark*." We may be tempted to think that we hit the mark every now and then...

Its been used in the context, to say... "*Nobodies perfect*..." Paul isn't insinuating here, that there are some people who really come close, that there are some who are very godly people, but somewhere along the line, they *fall short*... they *messed up*!

That's not what he is saying at all... Quiet the contrary... Paul is not insinuating that "anyone" even remotely close! He actually has declared just the opposite to be true! That instead of falling a little short of righteous living...that man has not the "*slightest possibility*" of producing any righteousness at all!

Verse 23 is just another way of stating the truth he taught back in 3:9~12, "Total Depravity of Man!"

^{9b}...they are **all under sin**...

To be "**under sin**..." is to be in *denominated by it*, or *under the authority of it!*

¹⁰As it is written, There is **none** righteous, no, **not one**...

¹¹There is **none** that understands...

...there is **none** that seeks after God...

¹²They are **all gone out of the way**...

...they are together become unprofitable...

...there is **none** that doeth good...

...no, not one...

Nobody Understands... **Nobody** Seeks God...**Everybody** is going their own way...
Everybody is useless in the things of God...**Nobody** does good! **...no, not one...**

Man is "***Totally Depraved***..." There is **no righteousness in man at all**...

He is speaking to the fact, that **all the "Unregenerate man" can produce is sin!**

Understanding that truth...we better understand what Paul is saying here in verse 23...

...for there is no difference: ²³*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

Paul is stating that there was "*no distinction*", no difference between the "*Gentile*" who had no dealings with the law...or the "*Jews*" who adhered to the law!

Both were equally sinful, both were **equally guilty** before God!

In spite of the Jews **dedication** to the Law of God, in spite of their strict obedience to the words of Moses, Regardless how they diligently attempt to fulfill ever little jot and tittle of the law to please God...

They are no closer than the Gentiles **who try not at all!**

Even though "outwardly" ...they appear to be!

Verse 23 could be worded... "All people are sinners!" "All have MISSED THE MARK!"

Thus...ALL need Christ!

(Illustration) It would be the same as offering someone who is "*healthy*", a cure for cancer... They might listen to what you have to say, even be impressed to what all it can do, and find the facts about this drug interesting... They might even make a donation to help fund the research of it, and help fund for others to be able to get it... But as far as themselves...they see little or no value in it...

Now let them develop cancer...and it becomes a different story...

The reason this passage is so important to your worship of God, your love of God, your service to God, is the fact that until you correctly understand "*Who we are*" and "*Who is really is*", until we really grasp the depths of our sinfulness, will we ever start to understand his goodness...his righteousness!