

The author inserts personal comments when quoting Scripture which are indicated by square brackets. All biblical references are quoted from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Romans 3 beginning at verse 21. Our subject is the righteousness of God. We begin a new series in one of the books that really puts you into the heavenly places, to say the least. It is the book of Ephesians. We are going to talk about exactly how we are blessed by God. Now there are a lot of folks who want to bless us. You know what I mean? And it may not be what we want. But God has blessed us, according to the Bible, “with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). I would just like to know that I have all there is to get, spiritually speaking. How about you?

I mean, everybody comes around telling me that I need something else. My wife and I just moved into a new place and it is amazing how advertisers know we moved. And we get all these letters telling us if we only had what they have we would be much happier. I am already happy. I am already having a good time. Do not pop my bubble. I am going home to be with the Lord and I am having a wonderful time now. I do not need any of your stuff. Amen?

It is wonderful to know that you already have everything you could ever possibly get in the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet I see a lot of us walking around like we have nothing. We can be so discouraged and defeated. We have never really understood what God has said that we already have. If you are interested in that, that is the message. We are blessed and that is the subject from Ephesians 1.

We are talking about the righteousness of God. And I know that sometimes I can overstate the importance of a given message. Sometimes a person may hear a message they like a lot and that I may not have thought it was too significant, and vice versa. But I know, from the standpoint of content alone and the problem of our culture, that what we are going to talk about today is extremely important.

I know that our culture believes a person is made righteous by what he does. There is no doubt in my mind that that is what our culture believes. And unfortunately, many who call themselves Evangelical Protestant Christians also believe the same thing. It comes under different names. Sometimes the word “discipleship” is used that way. We think by what we have done, either in our knowledge of the Word or our ability to pray or witness, or to do acts of mercy and kindness to others, that somehow we are improving. We think that we are getting a little more righteous.

You can find it also in our conversation about people who are new to the faith. We speak about “us” and “them.” There are people who just have come to know Christ, perhaps in the last month, who do not look like the rest of us who have been sitting around here for thirty or forty years.

The truth of the gospel is that you are never more righteous than the day you received Christ as your Lord and Savior. You never improve on that at all. As a matter of fact, I do not believe that any one of us is made righteous at all, by our life here. Now you may have felt that. That may have given you attitudes of superiority over somebody, or a “holier than thou” attitude, or something else. But let me tell you, you are not any more righteous thirty years later than you are the day that you come to know Jesus Christ. That is why Christians need to love each other, because we do not all look and act alike. As a matter of fact, a lot of us look at others and immediately see areas in need of improvement. Have you noticed that? You can almost feel that. Just thinking about it and somebody comes into your mind. “Oh, if they would only learn.” And some wives and some husbands have been working many years on improving their partner, only to discover that very little change takes place.

My dear friends, what we are going to talk about today could really change your life. It really could, if you really get a hold of this and really understand it.

Romans 3 kind of captures the argument about the righteousness of God. Romans is a good book on that. There are ninety-one mentions of the word “righteous” in the New Testament and thirty-five of them are in the book of Romans alone. The word “faith” appears fifty-five times in this book. The theme of Romans is: “The righteous live by faith.” Martin Luther wrote in his German Bible, “faith alone.”

In Romans 3:21–28 it says,

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;
23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,
25 whom God set forth as a propitiation [a mercy seat and by application a satisfaction of God’s wrath. God sent Him to be a propitiation] by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance [His patience with us] God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,
26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just [or righteous] and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.
28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Let's look to the Lord in a moment of prayer.

Father, we thank You for the wonderful book we call the Bible that reveals who You are and what You have done and what You will do. And I pray, God, that as we examine that wonderful attribute and work of righteousness, that You will help us to understand our own position before You. We know there are lots of people who call themselves Christians who have never understood the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ. And I pray, God, that You would bring clarity, meaning, powerful meaning to our lives, as we begin to see what righteousness is all about. We thank You for what You are going to do. In Jesus' name. Amen.

I really have two questions. One, what is the righteousness of God? And two, why is it so important? When you ask me what the righteousness of God is, I can approach it from a grammatical meaning. When we look at the Hebrew word in the Old Testament, *tsedeq*, it has to do with what is "straight," in opposition to that which is "crooked." It refers to that which is "right" in opposition to that which is "wrong." Its grammatical meaning is important. When you come to Greek, it is *dikaioo* in Greek and its many forms, it means "to declare righteous." It does not mean "to make righteous."

What I just said is probably one of the most controversial statements, though you may not have known it. It is the difference between being Catholic and Protestant. Many of us come from one of those backgrounds. We need to understand that righteousness in its grammatical meaning, never means "to make righteous." But a lot of us have come to believe that somehow we are made righteous by what we do. Or in Catholic theology, some believe it is mediated to us, perhaps through the sacraments. My friends, we are not made righteous.

So let me give you some examples. In Proverbs 17:15 it says, "He who justifies the wicked is an abomination to God" (paraphrased). Now folks, we do not make the wicked righteous. The meaning of the word is we just "declare" them to be righteous. Whoever declares a wicked man to be righteous that is an abomination to God.

Let me give you another example. Luke 7:29 says, "Even the tax collectors justified God." Now I want you to know, God does not need to be made righteous by any one of us. What it is saying is that they declared Him to be righteous because of the gospel that now affected them and they became believers. So they justified God. They did not make Him righteous, that is for sure. But they declared Him to be righteous in the work of the gospel, and thus they believed in Him.

Here is another example. In 1 Timothy 3:16 it says, "Great is the mystery of godliness," which is referring to Jesus. It says, "God was manifest in the flesh; justified in the Spirit."

Once again, Jesus did not need to be made righteous. What it means is He was declared to be righteous.

Now my friends, when you understand that—and by the way, I will say this without any hesitation—I have never found one usage of the word “righteousness” in the New Testament that ever means “to make righteous.” It is a doctrine that man wants, though, because we want to believe there is something we can do to either become a Christian or to somehow live the Christian life. But not once in the Bible does it say “to make righteous,” or even mean that. As a matter of fact, it cannot mean that, which we saw in the previous examples.

So we could look at grammatical meaning, but let me give you another example. Turn to Psalm 92:15. When you ask what righteousness is, I can approach it from a grammatical meaning and it does not mean “to make righteous.” It means “to declare righteous.” I also look at it in terms of moral understanding. When you ask what righteousness is, Psalm 92:15 would be an example of this. In that verse it says, “To declare that the Lord is upright [or righteous], He is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” From the standpoint of moral understanding, what does it mean when you say, “righteousness?” It means there is no moral unrighteousness. It means that it is absolutely free from any sin or unrighteousness.

If you say to me, “David, do you believe that you are declared to be righteous by God?” The answer is “yes.” If you ask me, “David, are you righteous?” Truthfully, no, I am not righteous. I am declared to be righteous by God. “Well, that sounds like you think you are perfect.” Does that mean my state? No. It means my standing before God. “Are you talking about performance?” No, I am not. I am talking about my position in Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, the only righteousness I have is that, and I do not have any other. It is just that Christianity has made me believe in moral performance and not in what the Bible teaches. Christianity has been infested and infected with a human performance system that not only is affecting how to become a Christian, but definitely has infected all of us in how to live the Christian life.

We are not living on the basis of faith in what Jesus did. We are living on the basis of our confidence in what we can do for Him. Even making such statements as, “I want the righteousness of Christ to live through me.” Really? Wait a minute! You already are as righteous as you will ever be. The moment you come to Christ, you have a position that is absolutely righteous. In a moral sense it means that you are already free from any sin or unrighteousness. You say, “I do not understand that because I do sin.” We know. We all know about each other, but that is what makes Christianity so wonderful because we are declared righteous in Christ.

Let me give you a little insight from a man who died a few years ago, a generation ago. His name was Dr. Alba J. McClain. He wrote a great book called, *Romans: The Gospel of God's Grace*. And in discussing the whole issue of the gospel on page 59 of that book, it is interesting what he said. First turn to Romans 1:16–17, in order to know why he was saying this. This is the theme of the whole book of Romans. It says,

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

17 For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just [or righteous] shall live by faith.”

Now you can see two things there. One, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. That is what it says. And also, in it you see the righteousness of God revealed.

Dr. McClain wrote these words about those two verses, he said:

The gospel is the power of God for salvation because in the gospel is a revelation. And that revelation is a manifestation of the righteousness of God. That is the reason the gospel has the power to save a sinner. Man has no righteousness. But God, in the gospel, has provided a righteousness. And He gives that to men if he will only take it. This fact makes Christianity different from every other religion the world has ever seen. Every great scheme to save men has failed on just one point. Its success depended on man's righteousness, when in reality there is no righteousness in man. Christianity attacks the problem at this point of righteousness. It recognizes that man has no righteousness. And then brings the righteousness of God and clothes that man in that righteousness and saves him.

Boy, is that ever the truth! You see from a moral understanding, when we speak of righteousness, it is absolutely free from any sin. Are we actually saying, as believers, that we have that kind of a position before God? And the answer is “absolutely yes.” On the basis of what Jesus Christ has done at the cross, I am absolutely righteous in every sense of the word.

Now in addition to a grammatical meaning or a moral understanding, you can look at the question of what the righteousness of God is from a practical application. Turn to Psalm 145, please, and look at verse 17. Here is a practical application for when you ask what the righteousness of God is. And by this we mean that every act of God is righteous and fair. It is just and fair. So you say, “What is the righteousness of God?” I would say that it is the acts of God that are always just and fair. God never does anything unfair. Psalm 145:17 says, “The Lord is righteous in all His—[What does it say?]-ways.” He is righteous in what He does. So here is a practical application in that God, in His righteousness, would never do anything that is not right. In Genesis 18:25 it says, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” So when we speak of righteousness, it is that every act of God is definitely righteous and definitely just.

Now here is one last thing. As you begin to examine what is the righteousness of God, there is not only a grammatical meaning or a moral understanding or even a practical application. What really concerns us is the theological usage of that term and it really consists of two things. I hope you will listen carefully. I do not want these confused in your mind. It is two things, theologically. One, it refers to who God is. Folks, listen to me. That is nontransferable. You will never be righteous like God, ever. It is nontransferable. The Bible says in 1 John 2:29, “You know that He is righteous.” Righteousness is an attribute of God. It is what He is. It is nontransferable.

Secondly, it refers to what God has done. When you read about His righteousness in the Bible, it is referring to either who He is or what He has done. Now who He is, is not transferable to you and me, but what He has done is transferable. Now what do we mean by what He has done? I will give you a statement. When you ask me about the righteousness of God, it is an act of God which declares us to be righteous on the basis of the death of Jesus Christ for our sins and the satisfaction of the law’s demands.

What is the righteousness of God? It is who God is. It is also what He has done. And what He has done is an act which declares us to be righteous on the basis of the death of Jesus Christ and that He satisfied all the law’s demands.

In Isaiah 53:11 is the great messianic chapter about Him who was “wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities and that all of our sin was laid on Him.” That passage says, “By His knowledge My righteous servant” [that is who God is and it is nontransferable] “shall justify many.” That is the act of God to declare us righteous on the basis of the fact that Jesus would die for our sins and bear our iniquity. So, “by His knowledge My righteous servant” [the Messiah who is absolutely righteous] “will justify many.” Because He is righteous, He does not have to die for His own sin; therefore, He substituted His life for us, paid for our sins and now declares us to be righteous. And we did not do anything except believe it. That is the incredible thing!

Another example would be in Jeremiah 23:5–6 where the Bible says “God will raise up to King David a righteous Branch. And He will judge in righteousness” (paraphrased).

Now turn to Romans 3 again where we were looking when we began. It refers to what God has done. Romans 3:21 says, “The righteousness of God is revealed apart from the law.” Even though you will find it in the law and the prophets, He says that it is through faith in verse 22. He mentions that all have sinned, in verse 23 and that we are declared righteous, freely by His grace in verse 24. He gives us what we do not deserve. It is through what? Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. “Redemption” means to buy us out of the slave market of sin and death and hell and set us free. How have we been set free from the consequences of sin? By something we did or even by our faith in the Lord Jesus? No, but by the redemption that is in Christ. My faith does not save me and neither does yours. Jesus Christ saves me. Faith is simply the channel that expresses confidence in what He did.

That is why a lot of people struggle with being a Christian. It is because they think it is their ability to believe it which somehow makes it so. No it does not. Even if you do not believe it, it is still true. You see, Jesus Christ saves you. 1 Corinthians 1:30 says, “He is our righteousness.” 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, “God the Father made Him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” He did not know any sin. Why? It is so that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. How interesting!

Romans 3:25 says, “God set forth Jesus to be a propitiation by His blood through faith to demonstrate His righteousness” (paraphrased). Do you realize that we would never learn how righteous God is if we did not see it in the gospel. You see, in the gospel you learn how righteous God is. It is because He does not depend one moment on what you are going to do to somehow atone for your sin.

A lot of us are still atoning for our sins. We cover up by our busyness. We learn to do that when we grow up. We try to please our parents. And we believe if we are good, then they will bless us; and if we are bad, we are in big trouble. You know, what we think is sometimes programmed by our background. And so, when we are hit with the gospel, it filters through what we have always felt we should do in order to get people to accept us. I just want you to know that you are accepted in Christianity, not on the basis of anything you did or how you look. You are accepted in the Beloved One, Jesus Christ our Lord.

See, that helps me. I sometimes say a sentence that many of you have heard. It goes on the radio a lot and I get letters about it, but I still say it because to me it is a miracle, this thing we call a church. If you knew what was in the heart of the person sitting next to you, you would move. Isn't God's grace wonderful? I mean there are some real stinkers in here. Do you know that? And it is wonderful how God, in His love and grace, can just put us all together and act like we are having a good time. I mean it is incredible when you think about it.

God's love is so great! You see, God did not trust one thing about you to save you. And that is a message we hear. Do you know how we get that? We ask someone to share his testimony and he comes up and tells us thirty reasons why God is lucky to have him. You know, testimonies are hard to share because there is too much of man in them and not enough of Christ.

In seminary, when we were told how to give a testimony, we were to give a certain amount of time to what you were before you became a Christian, then tell how you received Christ, and finally tell what it has been like since receiving Him. And I like what one old professor, who was in his 80s said, “If I were you, when I give a testimony, I would give about one minute to what you were before Christ and at least an hour to how wonderful He is.” That got in my brain, you know. We do not need to hear what was it like. Were you a dirty rotten drug dealer? Get up there and tell us all that you were a dirty rotten depraved sinner and that will be enough. We will understand. And then move on and tell us how wonderful the Lord is.

Do you understand what I'm saying? We have no righteousness of our own. You know this is a generation that is so much into themselves and it is programming us to think that somehow we are getting better. "Man, I went to church. You know, I only missed two Sundays all year?" Well, terrific, but let me tell you that even if you went every day you are not any more righteous than the day you received Christ. You may say, "I am so glad to hear that because I really wanted to skip for about six months." There are all kinds in the body of Christ, aren't there?

So I am going to ask the question now: "Why is this righteousness of God so important to me?" It is extremely important. And I am going to give you seven reasons.

Number one. The righteousness of God establishes the validity of all that God says. Did you ever think about it? Turn to Isaiah 45. Why is His righteousness so important? Because it establishes the validity of all that He says. How can I trust Him if He is not righteous? I love this passage. In Isaiah 45:22–25, God says,

22 Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.

23 I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.

24 He shall say, "Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength. To Him men shall come, and all shall be ashamed who are incensed against Him.

25 In the LORD all the descendants of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory."

Now this whole text is talking about the salvation that God will bring to His people. It is all based on the fact that you can count on His word. He said, "I have sworn by Myself and just so you know how important that is, the word that goes out of My mouth always goes in righteousness—always" (Isaiah 45:23, paraphrased).

God's righteousness establishes that He always does right. He establishes the validity of everything He says to us. And by the way, because we are not always right, that is why human opinion is always a little shaky. You ask somebody something and you have to figure out whether you should trust them or not. If they were always right and always just and always fair, then you could definitely accept everything they said as being the truth.

Number two. The righteousness of God is so important because it also explains the justice of God in judging us. A lot of people think God is unfair in that. This deals with both nonbelievers, as well as believers. Turn to Psalm 50, please, and look at verses 4–6. The righteousness of God is so important because it explains the justice of God in judging us. No matter whether you are a believer or a nonbeliever, nobody can accuse God of being unfair to them. He is going to judge you righteously.

4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth,
that He may judge His people:
5 Gather My saints together to Me, those who have made a
covenant with Me by sacrifice.
6 Let the heavens declare His righteousness, for God
Himself is—[What? What does it say? He is]—Judge.

Because of the righteousness of God, then God is always just. No one can ever accuse Him of being unfair. Acts 17:31 says, “He will judge the world in righteousness.”

Turn to Revelation 16, where the final plagues from God’s judging hand fall in the tribulation period, those seven last terrible plagues. It is interesting to note the emphasis on the justice and righteousness of God. Some people think that He is not righteous in what He is going to do. It says in verse 4,

4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and
springs of water, and they became blood.
5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: “You are
righteous, O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is
to be, because You have judged these things.
6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and
You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just [or
righteous] due.”
7 And I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord
God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

Isn’t it interesting? To describe the fairness and the justice of God, it takes one of the judgments that turns water into blood. The angel said, “It is clear to me that God is righteous and just, because in fact, the people who are experiencing that have taken the lives of people who love the Lord and shed their blood” (paraphrased). So He turned their drinking water into blood. That is justice. “It is an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. It is a life for a life,” says Exodus 21.

Listen, to me, I do not really want justice from God. You know, I have thought about this for a long time. I do not want God to be “just” with me at all. I really don’t. I know He will be, but I do not want Him to be. I am not interested in God being fair. I am not screaming at God saying, “Thanks a lot! Why won’t You be fair with me? I mean, look at all I have done for”... and I do not even want to say the word. I don’t want to slip it out, lest I get what I deserve. I don’t want what I deserve. I want what I don’t deserve. I want mercy. I want forgiveness. I want grace from God. If I get what I deserve, I am going to be in hell.

The gospel tells me that God, because He is a just God, is not going to sweep my sin under the rug—in case you thought that. God must judge sin and the gospel says that God was so righteous that He judged it all in the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. John 3 says that all the wrath of God against sin was laid on Jesus Christ. And if you reject Jesus

Christ, His only answer to our sin, then you deserve hell, brother and sister. You deserve it, no matter what you say. God has provided the only answer for you. If you say, “No, no, no, God let me earn it.” It would be impossible because you never could. You could never atone for all that is wrong with you. God took care of the whole thing. And if you reject that, there isn’t any other message. There isn’t any other hope.

How wonderful is the righteousness of God? Turn to Hebrews 6:10. It not only establishes the validity of all that God says, it explains the justice of God in judging us, and I like this—the righteousness of God encourages us in knowing that God will never forget what we have done. It is because God is just and fair, He will never forget.

Have you ever noticed how many people forget? They just forget. You do something nice and they forget to say, “Thank you.” Did you ever notice how that affects you? You may say, “Well you know, we sent them a gift. It has been four weeks now and we have not even heard from them.” Maybe that other person is saying, “You know, I know we thanked them. Didn’t we thank them, John? I don’t remember. Did you do it? You know, if we didn’t thank them—we probably—this is going to end our relationship.” Now I don’t know if you people go through this kind of stuff.

You see, righteousness on a human standpoint, is like a giant ledger. We are all trying to balance it out. Did they send us a card last year? What does that have to do with you sending one this year? Well, because they did last year. You have to even it out—debit and credit. Amen? That was a pretty expensive gift they gave. Well, we should give something a little more expensive.

What are we trying to do? You know, it is like all of life is built on this system. And you know, I just love the fact that God is so just and fair. He is never going to forget what we have done. Even if a thousand people forget and nobody said “thank you,” and they do not know what you did, God does. He will never forget.

I love this verse. Many of you know that my wife, thinking I needed this encouragement, cross-stitched this in a beautiful plaque and I love to look at it. Hebrews 6:10 says,

For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love
which you have shown toward His name, in that you have
ministered to the saints, and do minister.

You not only did it in the past, you are still keeping on, keeping on. I know some people that want to quit because there is no appreciation around here. Do you know that? Somebody works in an area and they may say, “I tell you, does anybody know I change diapers here in the nursery at the eleven o’clock hour? I bet nobody has ever known. I bet they don’t even know my name. They’ve got a computer. They ought to have it on the computer. You know, I have been in that department for three months and I haven’t heard one person say ‘thank you.’ I am not going back.”

Hey, God is not unjust to forget what you have done. Every cup of cold water given in His name will receive a reward. You are not fooling anybody. God also knows whether you are just doing a snow job too. God knows whether you ever did anything or not. But God is not unjust. And it encourages us when we think of the righteousness of God, to know that He will never forget what you have done, although everybody else does.

Number four. Go back to Romans 3 again. The righteousness of God is very important because it eliminates any need for self-righteousness. I like to say when I come to this point, “Whoaa!—did you get that?” I do not know how that translated. It eliminates any need for self-righteousness. And I like to say, “Whoaa—praise God!” Do you ever get tired of trying to be righteous? I mean, that can wear you out. Trying to do what you are supposed to do. Listen folks, none of your righteousness is going to help one bit.

Romans 3:27–28 says,

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.
28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

I was in a store and the lady in the store asked me,

“What do you do?
And I said, “Well I preach.”
She said, “What’s that?”
I said, “I talk.”
“Lots of people talk. What do you talk about?”
I said, “I talk about God and the Bible.”
“Oh,” she said, “I think that is so wonderful. You know, I can understand why God must be pleased with you, because you do that.”
I said, “Well, He is actually not pleased with me on that basis.”
“Why? What have you done?”
So, it’s interesting. I said, “Well you see the day I became a Christian, I trusted Jesus Christ—I am perfect now.”

It was just funny. You know, I finally gave up because it was obvious, she was not following it.

It is interesting how people think that you are such a nice person. “Did you do that? You took food to the needy. Oh, that’s wonderful. You gave blankets to the homeless. That’s wonderful.” Am I criticizing that? You have me all wrong, if that is what you think. I believe the most active people in this world for those kind of issues, ought to be Bible believing Christians. But on the other hand, were you doing that to get some sort of acceptability? Is that what you thought? Did you think you would be better off by doing those things? Did you think you would become more righteous? No, that is not true at all.

You see, the gospel eliminates all of that. Turn to Romans 10 and let me show you why. In Romans 10:1–4 it says,

- 1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved.
- 2 For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.
- 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.
- 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

He is the end. You cannot go any further. That is it. He has taken care of it.

Look at Titus 3:4–7 please. The Bible is very clear that when the righteousness of God is understood and applied in your life, it eliminates any need for self-righteousness. You do not need to do that anymore. You are wasting your time. Besides, it is frustrating—just don't do that anymore! You are not achieving anything. You think that you are impressing others. You are not impressing God. He has already declared you to be righteous. You are already blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. I read in Titus 3:4-7,

- 4 But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,
- 5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit,
- 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior,
- 7 that having been justified [or declared righteous] by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Paul wrote in Romans that if grace is works, then it is not grace. It is not by works that we have done, but it says that we are justified, declared righteous, by His grace. God is giving us something we do not deserve. And that is a wonderful, wonderful passage to remind us that when you know the righteousness of God eliminates any need for self-righteousness. Praise God! It is tiring. It wears you out. It does not achieve what you think. Relax in the wonderful love of the Lord. Relax in the fact that you are already as righteous as you ever will be if you have put your faith in Jesus Christ and Him alone. If you put your faith in yourself and what you do, I can understand why you are a little weary and maybe a little fearful that you cannot hang on.

Number five. Turn to 1 John 2. Why is the righteousness of God so important? Well it not only establishes the validity of all that God has said and it explains His justice in

judging us, it also encourages us to know that He will never forget what we have done. And it eliminates any need for self-righteousness. But folks, here is the interesting thing. It also enables us to practice righteousness in our own personal lives.

You may say, “Wait a minute, I thought we couldn’t be any more righteous.” That is true. But did you know that you can practice righteousness in your life? You can do something right. And because we are righteous before God, it enables us through the power of the Holy Spirit and His Word, to actually practice it.

In 1 John 2:29 it says,

If you know that He is righteous [and He certainly is], you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

In 1 John 3:7 it says,

Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous.

This declared position actually enables me to do something right.

In 1 John 3:10 it says,

In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness [that would be from God’s point of view, not man’s] is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

It gets very practical, doesn’t it?

In Titus 2:12 it says that we are to live righteously in this present age. In 1 Thessalonians 2:10, Paul said of he and his coworkers that they behaved righteously or justly among them.

Turn to 1 Peter 2:24 and it says,

Who Himself [Jesus Christ] bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, might live for [what?] righteousness—by whose stripes we were healed.

God wants us to live righteously in our lives, but we are not being made righteous. And my ability even to do something righteous is based on whether or not I have been born again by the Spirit of God, which comes through God declaring me righteous on the basis

of what Jesus did. It is almost like a giant paradox. I want to do right, but as Paul said, “Every time I try it, I blow it.”

What I need to understand is that I am already righteous in Christ. It is because of what He has done for me and how He has blessed me, and how He has given me His Holy Spirit, that I can actually, every now and then, do what I like to call “leak out glory.” I can, once in a while, do something right.

Number six. The righteousness of God is so important because it exalts God in making our salvation possible. Turn back to Romans 3 again. It exalts God in making our salvation possible. How does it do that? Well, for one thing, it exalts His grace. We are saved by grace and in Romans 3:24 it says, “Being justified [or declared righteous] freely by His grace.”

Turn over to Romans 5:18 please. Why does His righteousness exalt God? It is because it exalts His grace. In Romans 5:18–21 it says,

18 Therefore, as through one man's offense [namely Adam] judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act [that is the death of Christ] the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification [or righteousness] of life.

19 For as by one man's disobedience [Adam] many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience [Jesus Christ] many will be made righteous.

20 Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, [what abounded much more?] grace abounded much more,

21 so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

You know, I love to read that passage because God’s grace is exalted in my salvation. When sin abounds, God’s grace much more abounds. Hey, through one man’s disobedience many people became sinners. But through one Man’s obedience, Jesus Christ, many can be declared righteous in their life—just by one Man’s obedience. And so, God compares Adam on the negative side, with Christ on the positive side. We are all sinners. Adam disobeyed and we continue it. By the one act of Jesus Christ, many are made righteous.

Again, the righteousness of God in all that is seen exalts His grace. We do not do anything to earn it. It exalts His Son Jesus Christ because He is the only one through whom it comes.

One final thing. Turn to Romans 8. Why is the righteousness of God so important? Well, it not only establishes the validity of all God has said, and explains His justice in judging

us; it also encourages us to know that God will never forget what we have done and reward us. His righteousness eliminates any need for self-righteousness, enabling us to even practice righteousness, by doing something right in our personal lives, and exalting God in making our salvation possible, because where sin abounds, grace did much more abound. There is one final thing. It also expresses the reason why no one can condemn us or separate us from the love of Christ. Aren't you glad nobody can condemn you? There are a lot of people who are trying. No one can separate you from the love of Christ. Listen to these words. In Romans 8:31-39.

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

33 Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.

34 Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

36 As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

38 For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come,

39 nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

And all God's people said—Amen! Listen if you think you can lose your salvation, you do not know the righteousness of God.

"Well, what if you don't keep up with Him?"

Well see, your words have already shown that you do not know His righteousness. God is not asking you to keep up with anything. He is asking you to believe what Jesus Christ has already done.

"Well, you have to live it."

He knows your problem. He is going to give you His Holy Spirit.

"Well, I may get into sin. What if I backslide?"

You know, it is interesting how many people will come up with as many things as they can to somehow get themselves out of what they want to be in? It bothers me. Jesus said, “I give unto them eternal life. They shall never perish. Neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand” (John 10:28).

“Well, you can jump out of His hand.” Are you kidding? He holds everything in His hand. I like to say that you can move from knuckle to knuckle, but you are not getting out. Nothing—zero—can separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus the Lord. Why? It’s because it is God who declares you righteous.

Is there anyone around who can condemn us? Oh, they are everywhere. Hey listen, no one can condemn us! No one can bring a charge against God’s elect. You see, we have not been giving the correct message to the world. We have been making them think that Christianity teaches like the rest of the cults and “isms” that somehow you are made righteous by what you do. So if we do not measure up, then they have a case. They have no case, God says, “No charge. No condemnation.” Why? It is because Christianity is not a bunch of people trying to live by a certain standard or a code. Christianity is Jesus Christ our Lord. You are either in Him or not in Him, one or the other. You are either righteous or you are not. There is not any middle ground or any ladder. You are either His or you are not His, one or the other.

Let’s close with prayer.

Lord, You know that a lot of us fight this because we want to prove our worth. Lord, I thank You that that struggle is over the moment we believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus is everything to us. We have all in all when we have Him. We have every spiritual blessing. Father, there are those in our midst who maybe have tried to be Christian by hanging around us, by learning how we talk, by saying all the right words and by trying to be good or avoiding certain serious sins. God, I pray that You would strip all that out of our hearts and show us Jesus Christ. That it is only through His death on the cross and His resurrection that anyone can be saved. And that is the righteousness of God. We have no righteousness of our own. Oh God, help us to see that we are sinners saved by the wonderful grace of God. We thank You, in Jesus name. Amen.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

McClain, Dr. Alva J., *Romans: The Gospel of God’s Grace*. BMH Books, December 1979. Pg. 59