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Romans 44 Righteousness of God

Romans 3:20-22, *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

²¹But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all ²³and on all who believe. For there is no difference; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, ²⁶to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

How to Be Right with God?

Job asked that question, the most important question that any person could ever ask.

Job 9:2-20, *“Truly I know it is so, But how can a man be righteous before God? ³If one wished to contend with Him, He could not answer Him one time out of a thousand. ⁴God is wise in heart and mighty in strength. Who has hardened himself against Him and prospered? ⁵He removes the mountains, and they do not know When He overturns them in His anger; ⁶He shakes the earth out of its place, And its pillars tremble; ⁷He commands the sun, and it does not rise; He seals off the stars; ⁸He alone spreads out the heavens, And treads on the waves of the sea; ⁹He made the Bear, Orion, and the Pleiades, And the chambers of the south; ¹⁰He does great things past finding out, Yes, wonders without number. ¹¹If He goes by me, I do not see Him; If He moves past, I do not perceive Him; ¹²If He takes away, who can hinder Him? Who can say to Him, ‘What are You doing?’ ¹³God will not withdraw His anger,*

The allies of the proud lie prostrate beneath Him. ¹⁴“How then can I answer Him, And choose my words to reason with Him? ¹⁵For though I were righteous, I could not answer Him; I would beg mercy of my Judge. ¹⁶If I called and He answered me, I would not believe that He was listening to my voice. ¹⁷For He crushes me with a tempest, And multiplies my wounds without cause. ¹⁸He will not allow me to catch my breath, But fills me with bitterness. ¹⁹If it is a matter of strength, indeed He is strong; And if of justice, who will appoint my day in court?

*²⁰ Though I were righteous, my own mouth would condemn me;
Though I were blameless, it would prove me perverse.*

What Job is saying is that because God is the kind of God He is, how can I ever approach Him?

How can I ever be right with Him?

How can I ever get an audience with Him?

How can I ever have a relationship with such a God so mighty, so holy, so powerful?

Can a man be right with a God like that?

Can a man have a right relationship with that holy, infinite, mighty God?

The answer is Yes!

All throughout human history men have asked themselves that same question. That is why religion exists, because man seeks to be right with the God.

How else can a man escape a sense of guilt, emptiness, and meaningless?

How else can he eliminate the fear of death, the dread of punishment from a holy God?

Every religion in the world offers an answer to that question. Every religion in the world suggests to man how he can be right with God.

The religions of the world tells him that he can be right with God if he does certain things on his human effort.

It is always the religion of human achievement.

It is always the religion of works.

It is the religion of self with human activity.

But the Bible clearly demonstrates that a man can be right with God, but not on the basis of anything that man does.

Christianity stands distinct from every other religion in the world.

There are only two religions in the whole world.

- The religion of human achievement that encompasses every human religion and they are all the same.
- The religion of divine accomplishment, and that alone is Christianity.

The Bible says a man can be right with God, but he cannot be right with God on his own terms. He can't make himself right with God from his end.

If men are to be right with God, then it is going to have to happen from God's end.

Men must find a way; there must be a way to be right with God. Paul gives us here the answer.

Paul has shown that nobody can be right with God on the basis of his own human effort. Paul had taken the first 3 chapters to establish that truth.

Romans 3:9-10, *What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. ¹⁰As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;*

Romans 1:18, *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*

So, Paul shows that all men are under sin and therefore God will judge them all.

Romans 2:2-3, *But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. ³And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?*

God is going to judge all men and all men are sinners.

God is going to judge on the basis of the facts and everybody's going to get judged because even the man who's condemning someone else ends up condemning himself.

Romans 2:11-12, *For there is no partiality with God. ¹²For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law*

So, Jew and Gentile, those who know and those who don't know, all are sinful, all will be judged by the facts whether they had the law or didn't have the law.

Romans 3:10-18, *As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one; ¹¹There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. ¹²They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one." ¹³"Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit"; "The poison of asps is under their lips"; ¹⁴"Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness." ¹⁵"Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶Destruction and misery are in their ways; ¹⁷And the way of peace they have not known." ¹⁸"There is no fear of God before their eyes."*

This is a characterization of sinful man.

Romans 3:19, *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

There's no defence.

There is nothing to say.

All the world is guilty before God.

What about the people who do good things?

Romans 3:20, *Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.*

Man cannot be right with God from his own end.

All men are sinners.

All men are under condemnation.

Whether they are religious or irreligious, they will be judged according to the facts of their unrighteousness, and they cannot be right with God on their own.

So, Paul has been three chapters condemning man. He has brought men to the judgment bar of God, and they have given all their defences, and every mouth is stopped, nothing more to say.

The Jews believed that they could be right with God by meticulous attention to the Law. But they had to face the fact they couldn't keep the Law.

What is the law of God for if you can't keep it?

Simple, it is for you to show that you can't keep it.

You wouldn't know you were a sinner unless you knew you couldn't keep the standard, so you must know the standard.

Romans 7:7, *What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet."*

God has given the law, that is the revealed Law in the Word of God as well as the law of conscience.

God has given the Law, not so that men can live up to it and be righteous, but so that men can know they can't live up to it and seek a righteousness they can't generate on their own.

So, the way to God is not by human effort!

It's impossible.

This was true in the Old Testament. People may think that the Old Testament men and women got right with God because they did sacrifices, rituals, etc. No, that wasn't true. That was

just the activity of faith. That was the result of their already being right with God, or else it was pure hypocrisy and unacceptable to God.

Micah 6:6-7, *With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? ʹWill the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

Micah says that What am I going to do to be right with God?
Bring Him what God says in the Old Testament is the prescription for sacrifice?

Bring Him ten thousand sacrifices?

Even give my son and offer my son on the altar and burn him up?

What am I going to do to be right with God?

The implied answer is nothing!

You can't do anything.

All sinners are under judgment.

All sinners are equally unable and incapable of making things right with God and avoiding that judgment.

Every mouth is stopped. There is none righteous, no not one.
So, the plight of man is dark, dismal, and despairing.
Man bound for hell and there is no remedy in his world.

False religion provides such false security for people.

V 21, *But now* the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
"But now."

Paul says now the light has dawned and the darkness is dispelled.

"But now" means "at this present time."

Paul says at this crucial moment in redemptive history.

"the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed."

What does righteousness mean?

It simply means to be right with God!

It is not the righteousness of man!

It is the righteousness of God!!

It is the righteousness of God manifested because the righteousness of man doesn't make it.

Isaiah 64:6, *But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.*

The original Hebrew means "menstrual rags," filthy. That's the best that men can do. The righteousness of men can't do it. So, we are introduced to the righteousness of God. So, man can't be right with God if he approaches it from the human side. It must be approached from God's side.

The light comes from above, not up from beneath.

The Bible talks about the light of the glorious gospel that shines in the darkness. When Jesus was born, they talked about a light coming into the world unto the Gentiles.

John 8:12, *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

The term "righteousness" and the "righteousness of God." This differs from any other kind of righteousness. The word "righteousness" means "to be right," to be righteous, to be good as over against evil, to be holy as over against unholy. This is a righteousness that comes from God that's different than any other kind of righteousness.

How it is different?

Author.

Isaiah 45:8, *“Rain down, you heavens, from above, And let the skies pour down righteousness; Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, And let righteousness spring up together. I, the Lord, have created it.*

Created what?

Righteousness.

Why is this righteousness different?

Because God made it.

It's very different than anything ever created by men.

Nature.

It is a different righteousness by nature.

A comprehensive kind of righteousness.

This kind of righteousness fulfilled both the precept and the penalty of the law. Now think with me. Jesus came as the utter fulfilment of God's righteousness.

Jesus was right with God, absolutely perfect.

Always did the Father's will,

Always spoke the Father's Word,

Never violated the Father,

Never moved against the Father's will,

Never sinned a sin or thought an evil thought or said an evil word of any kind.

Absolutely without sin and therefore He had a righteousness which perfectly fulfilled the law.

He kept every law of God in perfection.

Because they could never do that.

That's why Jesus said.

Matthew 5:20, *For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

They had a righteousness. There is a righteousness of men. It just doesn't get them anywhere. But this righteousness is the kind which was demonstrated in an ability to fulfil the whole law without a flaw.

Secondly, this righteousness died in perfection, fulfilling the penalty of the law.

When Jesus went to the cross, He again fulfilled righteousness. Because God was right, holy, and He had to punish sin. He not only did it, but He came out the other side of the grave having conquered death, hell, Satan, sin and rose from the dead.

So, this righteousness is different due to its author and it's different due to its very nature. It is that kind of righteousness which can perfectly keep the Law and perfectly satisfy the law.

Righteousness is everlasting righteousness.

Daniel 9:24 talks about God's everlasting righteousness.

Psalm 119:142 talks about God's everlasting righteousness. It is a forever righteousness.

Hebrews 9:12 it talks about an eternal redemption provided for us.

Hebrews 10:14 that He's perfected forever them that are sanctified by the offering of Christ on the cross.

God's righteousness:

The author is God.

He created it.

Jesus Christ demonstrated that it is a kind of righteousness that can fulfil God's Law in utter perfection by keeping all the laws and by even satisfying the law in terms of its penalty.

A righteousness that lasts forever.

Anything God creates is as perfect as the one who created it. It gives the capability of utter and total obedience, and it lasts forever.

If you ever to receive this, it means that you will have the capability to fulfil the whole law of God in utter perfection, and it means that once you have received it then you have it forever.

This righteousness of God granted by the love of God because God didn't have to do that, but He did.

The key term in the passage is righteousness, in one form or another. The root translated "righteousness," or "just" or "justifier" or "justified," it's all from the same root.

This word is used over 60 times in Romans.

The key word in Romans is "righteousness."

Romans is all about how you get right with God.

It means to make right.

When Paul says "the righteousness of God is manifest" he is saying that the deepest most profound question in the human heart has an answer.

Can a man be right with God?

Paul says yes.

How can a man be right with God?

The righteousness of God is revealed from heaven.

God then can take any man because all men basically are evil and make him right with Himself.

Paul loves to talk about how God justifies the ungodly. How God in mercy makes men right with Himself.

1. The righteousness of God is apart from legalism.

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

Whenever you see the Greek word *nomos* or "law," you want to be very careful how you interpret it because Paul uses it in a lot of different ways.

Sometimes it refers to

- Legalism,
- Ceremonial law of God,
- Moral law of God,
- Old Testament Scripture,
- A principle, like a general law.

Paul uses it in two ways in this one verse. Because first he says, "This righteousness is apart from the law," and then he says, "But it is witnessed by the law."

Paul uses law in two different ways.

The first one. He says this righteousness is apart from the law.

Paul uses the word there in the sense of legalism. It is apart from any man-made human effort.

What do you mean?

It is apart from man's effort to keep a system of rules. It doesn't happen that way. We don't gain this righteousness by the things that we are able to do in our own strength.

There are people who light candles and crawl on their knees and there are people who try to live up to certain rules and certain standards.

The law of God only works wrath.

All the law of God does is give God the right to condemn people. That's all it does. The law of God is only good to condemn people because nobody can keep it.

So, it justifies God's wrath.

Romans 4:15, *because the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.*

The Law works wrath. In other words, it just shows that God has a right to be angry because you can't keep it.

So, you want to spend your life trying to make yourself right with God from your end and all you are going to do is justify God's wrath because you can't keep the Law, you can't live up to the law.

Romans 3:28, *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.*

Men do not get right with God by something they do.

Romans 4:6, *just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:*

David describes the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness apart from works. It's apart from anything man does.

Romans is the mind of Paul on the righteousness of God.

Galatians is the heart of Paul on the righteousness.

Galatians 2:16, *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*

Galatians 2:21, *I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain."*

If you could make yourself right with God without Christ dying on the cross, then Christ wasted His time.

Galatians 3:10, *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them."*

All those people who try to get to God by their works, try to get to God by their own self-righteousness, all they do is keep themselves under the curse.

Why?

Because cursed is everyone that continues not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.

So, if you try to live by the law, you are just going to get cursed because you are going to come short of the whole law.

Galatians 3:11, *But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for "the just shall live by faith."*

By legalism, by doing certain things.

Ephesians 2:8-10, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,⁹ not of works, lest anyone should boast.¹⁰ For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

2 Timothy 1:9, *who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own*

purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

How did God make His righteousness manifest?

By the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

When Christ came, God's righteousness was manifest.

In redemptive history when Christ has come, God's righteousness is made abundantly clear.

Titus 3:5, *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,*

Philippians 3:9, *and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;*

There is a righteousness that can make us right with God but it isn't the righteousness of men, it's the righteousness of God.

- It doesn't rise from below.
 - It comes down from above.
 - It is authored by God.
 - Its very nature is perfection.
 - Its duration is eternal.
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- It's not like man's righteousness.

Man's righteousness comes up from man, it is not perfect, it cannot keep the whole law and it doesn't last very long even when it's giving its best shot. It falls infinitely short.

We are to be right with God on God's terms.

This righteousness is unlike any other righteousness. The greatest error of religion in the world, the single greatest error of religion, is that it allows a place for the effort of people in making them right with God and there is no place for that! None at all!

2. Righteousness on revelation.

Is Paul introducing something new here?

- Jews are the people who hold the Law.
- Jews are the ones who love the law (in fact, they practically worshiped the law).
- Jews are the ones who strive with all of our might to keep the law.

Paul says that it is apart from the law.

Is this something new?

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

It means the Old Testament.

A Jewish phrase to describe the Old Testament.

Paul is saying, look, this is that which was witnessed to in the Old Testament, this isn't anything revolutionary, this isn't anything brand new, this isn't anything that just dropped out of the sky.

Even in the Old Testament we just read you in Micah 6, if you want to be right with God how many animals do you bring?

How many gallons of oil do you bring?

Job cried out in chapter 9, "How can I ever be right with that God?"

Amos 5:21-24, *"I hate, I despise your feast days, And I do not savour your sacred assemblies. ²²Though you offer Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them, Nor will I regard your fattened peace offerings. ²³Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. ²⁴But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream.*

The Hebrews tell us that by the blood of bulls and goats no one was ever justified.

The law was only given for one reason, Paul said, and that was to show us our sin. Even in the Old Testament, the law didn't make people righteous, it showed them how sinful they were, and it threw them on the mercy of God.

The whole point for a Jew was to look at the Law of God, realize he couldn't keep it and cry out for mercy and grace and believe that God would provide that.

People in the Old Testament were redeemed the same way as people in the New Testament or people today, they believed God and they knew they were sinful, and they knew they needed a Saviour, and they went to God to be their Saviour.

Though they may not have fully understood Christ because He hadn't come, they knew they needed a Saviour, and they knew the sacrifices depicted that Saviour who had to die for them.

This is that which the Old Testament promised.
There's no breach here.

Romans 4:2-3, *For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

Always it has been the same. The Old Testament witnessed to the fact that in order to be made right with God it had to come

from God's end. This isn't anything new, it was apart from legalism. All the law did was show them their sin.

David, another illustration.

Romans 4:7-8, *“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; ^sBlessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.”*

The ceremonies and sacrifices of the Old Testament couldn't give life. They couldn't forgive sin. They couldn't make people right with God.

People in the Old Testament were right with God when they believed God, when they acted in faith on His Word.

How much of His Word?

As much as had been revealed.

When they believed God and acted in faith in His Word, they were saved by God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

Then in obedience they carried out the ceremonies and the sacrifices which pictured their forgiveness.

But the Old Testament saw the need for a sacrifice and a righteousness beyond that of man's ability.

So, the gospel of Jesus Christ, contrary to what a Jew might think, is not a subversion of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was simply the shadow, and this is the substance.

3. Righteousness acquired by faith.

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

It comes by faith!

Just like Abraham, David, and anyone else.

It is not the righteousness of man. It came not through works. It is the righteousness of God, and it comes through faith. It's simply a matter of believing.

Romans 4:5, *but to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,*

There's nothing for us to do but believe.

Romans 5:1, *Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,*

Faith is the only instrument. Faith is the hand that reaches out and takes the righteousness of God. It is simply by believing.

Illustration of Abraham.

Romans 4:20-22, *He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God,²¹ and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.²² And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."*

How did Abraham get right with God?

He believed that what God said God would do.

By faith!

It is a gift of God, not of works.

What does man need to do?

He needs to believe.

He needs to have faith.

Have faith in God.

Faith in all that God said about Himself.

In Abraham's time God hadn't revealed as much as we have today but we still must believe all that God has said about Himself to be true. When you believe by faith you are made righteous.

False faith:

Some people would make this faith so simplistic and so easy. All you have to do is believe and that's it.

John 8:30-32, *As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. ³¹Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. ³²And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

We learn here about false faith. False faith tends to be momentary, whereas true faith tends to continue in obedience to the Word of God.

James 2:26, *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.*

Faith that has no fruit is like rocky soil where there's no root or thorny ground where the seed is choked out by the world system.

False faith may even look good at the beginning. There may be the joy, the immediate joy we see in the parable of Matthew 13.

We are saved by faith alone, but true faith. True faith has some elements to it.

- False Faith has for many people been sort of redefined to simply mean a passive agreement with facts about Jesus.
- Saving faith is not a passive agreement of the facts about Jesus. It is a placing of oneself totally in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:17, *But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.*

Three elements:

- Will,
- Emotions,
- Mind.

The will.

True faith is an exercise of the will. "You have obeyed."
There is an obedience of faith.

The will responds in obedience to the lordship of Christ.

The emotion.

You obeyed from the heart.

Not only the mind but embodying the emotions, the senses, awakened to sin, stirred by the Spirit of God. It rises from deep within a man.

The mind/intellect:

Because you obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which was delivered to you, the facts.

Work backwards.

First you heard the facts.

Secondly, they stirred your mind and your heart.

You responded by obedience in submission to Christ.

That is the true faith.

It's that deep commitment.

The righteousness of God is made available by faith, true faith.

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

faith in Jesus Christ

Not just faith in God, no vague attitude here. It is faith directed at the Lord Jesus Christ.

True saving faith directed at the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the embodiment of righteousness.

He is the one who by His death on the cross revealed God's righteousness to us.

- On the one hand He showed us God's righteousness by the demonstration of a perfect life.
- On the other hand, He showed us God's righteousness by dying on the cross.

God is so right that He has to punish sin. When Christ died, we saw how righteous God was. We also saw how loving God was.

The righteousness of God

It is apart from anything we do.

It is not by our works, or legalism,

It is that which the Old Testament taught all along,

It is ours by true faith in Lord Jesus Christ.

True faith is an utter abandonment in believing confidence in Jesus Christ. He alone can give to us the righteousness of God, which we must have if we are ever to be right with Him.

Will you abandon your effort to make right with God and receive in faith the righteousness of God which our Lord Jesus Christ dispense to us freely?