

## Transcription of 22ID3608

Romans 3:21-25a

"How To Be Right With God" (Pt 1)

January 12, 2022

All right. Let's open our Bibles tonight to Romans 3:21. I don't want to wait and get into it right away.

We have told you, I think, quite a few times that Paul was just writing a letter of recommendation for a lady that was moving to Rome, a sister in the Lord. But he ended up writing this masterpiece about three things: man's sin, God's salvation, and how the Lord can then sanctify His people to allow us and enable us to walk with Him.

We've ended that first section that began in verse 18 after Paul's introduction of himself (of chapter 1) and finished in chapter 2 last week. And Paul basically went out of his way to say here's every kind of sinner I can identify. He spent a long time explaining to us about the pagan idolater who got caught up in all these very corrupt, immoral and very offensive ways of worship for the idols in Rome and in Greece and wherever he might have traveled. He turned and spoke to the self-righteous moralist who was very proud of himself, fit really well into society; everyone applauded his moral base. And finally he turned to the religious leader, if you will, and said of him even the zealot, you're a sinner who needs a Savior. And it really doesn't matter in which group you come from. You end up in the same place. You're short. You're falling way short.

Clearly Paul is out to get us in the sense that he wants to convince us that all of mankind is both under the power of sin and is headed for the penalty of sin and that we're radically corrupt. We can define levels of sinfulness. We just can't get away from the label: we're sinners. From the most obvious pagan worshipper to the respectable sinner to the most moral religious attendee and everyone in between.

When we finished the first part of chapter 3 last week, Paul began there to speak to us about the character of the depraved man (chapter 3:10), then defined the conduct of this man, and then finally the cause of his depravity in verse 18 of chapter 3 where he says, "There's no fear of God in their eyes." And he used one of these rabbinical kinds of Hebrew practices of just piling a bunch of Scriptures together to make a point. And you can tell there, if you look in your Bible, down from 10 to verse 18 they should all be in italics; those are all quotes from the Old

Testament, if you will. The conclusion is devastating. Right? Man is radically corrupt. We cannot save ourselves. There's really no way out. The Russian poet, Ivan Turgenev wrote, "I don't know what the heart of a bad man looks like, but I know what the heart of a good man looks like, and it's terrible." And that's exactly, I think, what Paul would say as well.

So here's the dilemma - and Paul brings us to that tonight and next week - both for man and for God. For man, we're corrupt. We're not holy, and God is. How does God, with His divine justice which says the wages of sin is death, act upon His love which says that He wants to reach out to the guilty race and not fudge the rules or change the game plan, if you will, and maintain His holiness? How does God bring to Himself wicked people with a righteous God and not violate His own righteousness?

In these eleven verses, in the next two weeks, God gives us the miracle of His plan and that the righteousness that He has available is available to every man. It's a solution that satisfies both His justice and yet allows for a full expression of His love for His creation. It was Donald Barnhouse, who is a well-known Bible commentator, who wrote on chapter 3 here, towards the end, "I've put a heart on these verses because I'm convinced, after years of Bible study, that they are the most important ones in all of the Scriptures." And I think he has a point in the sense that this is really why the Lord gave us His Word and sent His Son. This is the rubber-meets-the-road, if you will, practice when it comes to your salvation and mine. It's certainly a turning point in this book. I mean, you've been with us for a while. These have been pretty depressing chapters, I think. I'm surprised you're still here. Way to go. I'm proud of you. But they were just bummers. Everything you read was just failure and misery and loss and judgment, and then you get to these.

It is a turning point because every person's life has to come to the place where they realize that they need help. When Job was going through all of his struggles, in chapter 9 of Job's book, he writes, "How can a man be right with God? How can he? I can't stand before Him. I can't argue my case with Him." And he goes on in chapter 9 - if you ever get a chance, just go read that chapter in and of itself - but he really begins to just kind of go over those questions. "I can't stand before the LORD. My days fly swiftly by. I'm afraid of what I'm headed for." And then he writes, in chapter 9:32, "For He is not a man, as I am, that I may answer Him, and that we should go to court together. Nor is there any mediator between us, who may lay his hand on us both. Let Him take His rod away from me, and do not

let dread of Him terrify me. Then I would speak and not fear Him, but it is not so with me." He was looking for this intercessor. Right? "I don't know how to stand before God with my sinfulness. I'm going to have to face the LORD." Later in the book of Job, Bildad - one of his counselors - said, in chapter 25:4, "How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?" or literally has this gene of him, if you will, this curse of sin in his own life? They are the most important words of all.

When John the Baptist began preaching to the crowds - and he wasn't a guy to beat around the bush; I don't know how many of you remember Pastor Romain at Calvary Chapel years ago, but he reminds me a lot of him - John said at the Jordan River, to the people gathered (Matthew 3:7), "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is to come? If you want to bear fruit worthy of repentance, great, but if not, don't be saying, 'Yeah, we're children of Abraham.' God can raise up from the stones children of Abraham." And so they said to him, as they listened to John, "What are we supposed to do then? How can we make this right?"

The crowd that Jesus fed the day before, miraculously, through the thousands that had followed, they came to Him, and they said (John 6:28), "What are we supposed to do to do the works of God? What are we supposed to do?" The rich young ruler followed Jesus around, and he said (Matthew 19:16), "Good Teacher, what can I do that I might have eternal life?" Peter preaches on Pentecost, and the crowds, hearing his words, cry out (Acts 2:37), "What shall we do? What are we supposed to do?" The Philippian jailer cries out (Acts 16:30), "How can I be saved?" Paul (or Saul at the time) says to the Lord, who knocks him down on the road (Acts 9:6), "What do You want me to do, Lord?" It is the most important question of all. How can I be right with God? What am I supposed to do in the situation that I find myself?

I think that the gospel, more than offends people, amazes them, and they need to hear it because it isn't a natural understanding. Scriptures make it clear that there is one way to God, but it is only His way; that you can come to the Lord, but not on your terms, on His terms. So that even the Bible reduces religion to two sets. One is the religion of divine accomplishment - what God has done for you. The other is the religion of human endeavor - what I've done for Him. And there really is no third party. Those are the two things that we look at. Paul will declare that all men are equally incapable of coming to the Lord in their own power, that

they have to be saved by God's provision of His grace, and that even the divine law of God which, by the way, is perfect - it was written by God, there's no fault in it, you can't correct it or improve upon it - was never designed to save. It was designed to cast a clear light upon our inability to measure up to God's standards. So God, in that whole deal of the law which we like to turn into performance, would say to you, "That's not a performance tool. That's a light. I want to shine it in your eyes so you can see yourself."

Tonight - and we're only going to look at four verses, verse 21 down through about the middle of verse 25 - I want to give you seven things that the Lord tells us about how God desires to impart to us His righteousness through His Son. I think you should write them down if you haven't or maybe memorize them. We'll give you some more next week. But I think these are absolutely vital to your understanding of the gospel, and it will certainly help as you go out and share your faith with others.

Verse 21 begins with these words, "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed." A major theme in the book of Romans is the word "righteousness." And the best way I can help you to understand what that is, is to think about the words "what God accepts" because "what God accepts" is the things that are righteous. It matches up with God's will, with His desires, with His hopes for us. Jesus said, in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:48), "If you'll be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, then you'll be fine." So, unless you can measure up to that, if you will, then we need some help. Perfect in behavior, perfect in intent, perfect in thought - that which only God is and can be. But now God wants us to be made in that image. But how?

First thing, verse 21. Our right standing with God, we are told, is available without the law. I want you to notice that very carefully. "Apart from the law." If you will, outside the legalistic approach of works or performance or earnings or accomplishments; no brownie points, no extra points, no extra help, no extra credit. Far from it. Some of us are way far away from righteousness; some of us are a step closer; all of us are miserably unable to be right, to be perfect. If you were imagining heaven to be Catalina Island - it's 26 miles or so off the coast of Huntington Beach - and we said to you, "To get there, all you have to do is jump off the pier at Huntington. Just take a running start, run as fast as you can, practice, work it out, and jump." And maybe the athletic guy gets 30' away from the pier before he hits the water. And maybe you, being non-athletic, just kind of fall off

the end. You're both hitting the water. You've both fallen short. One 30' shorter than the next but short nonetheless. We are nowhere close to getting to the Island. From a human perspective, we usually analyze the things that we see from the standpoint of "better than others," right, that somebody got closer, somebody is closer than I am - the way that they live, the things that they do. But in reality none of us is even close enough. Not even close enough. Twenty-five feet against 26 miles is not close enough. Right? And, in that sense, God sees us in our sin.

We were told last week, in verse 20, that "by the deeds of the law no flesh can find a justification in God's sight. For by the law" (is not accomplishment but) "is the knowledge of sin." So, the law is not a performance quiz; it is a mirror to reflect back to you how wicked you are and how unable you are to please God. You should look at what God demands and go, "I can't do that!" Failed. Love your enemy. Failed. Forgive those that wrong you. Failed. Pure of heart. Failed. Don't be selfish. Failed. You just failed! "Yeah, but I jumped 25'." Failed. You didn't make it to the Island.

Up to now, the book of Romans, from after the introduction, has been bleak and dark and sad and hopeless and focuses on sin and God's wrath. But notice, in verse 21, that the words begin, "But now." Very hopeful. Having heard all of the bad news, Paul now wants to deliver the good news to our relief, and it's the great turning point because it begins with this: a right standing with God - having a life that God accepts - can be found outside of the performance arena, can be found outside of the law. There's a way to be right with God even if you've messed up everything else, and God wants you to know what way that is. He's aware of your failure. He's aware that you tried to get to Catalina dry, and you're all wet. He knows. We could probably have passed on this portion of Scripture had we not first subjected ourselves to the idea (for two and a half chapters of Romans) that we are tremendously guilty in our sin. But what if God had not acted? What if God has no plan? What if we find our futures just written here in the judgment that is coming? Sin, downward spiral, destruction. But then we get to these words, "But now." I love those words. "But now." For God so loved the world. "But now."

It is a radical idea for us to grab on to the gospels when we have grown up all of our lives with the attitude of understanding works righteousness. From when you were a little kid: clean your room, get an allowance; do good in school, get something else - get a phone, get a toy; do good at work - you'll get promoted, you'll be successful, you'll make some money, you'll have some power. From an early age,

it was always: if you do something good, something good's coming back to you. You know? Santa's checkin' his list twice. Have you been naughty or nice? That's the key right there. Is there a reward or an earning, a deserving? We see it in religion. We see it in business. We see it in child rearing. We see it everywhere in the society. So we grow up with the.....we had to earn something, we get what we deserve. Or we think that we do. But that whole thing gets set on its head when it comes to God's relationship with man. It is that very outlook that caused Paul to write the same thing over and over and over again in the Scriptures, that we cannot trust in our own works. He said to the Colossians, in chapter 2:16, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths." He wrote to the Galatians (2:16), very clearly, "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." He writes in Romans 3:28, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law." Wherever you turn, God says the same thing. It is such a radical concept. God gives you something for just trusting in Him. You don't earn it, you don't deserve it. It is grace based on faith that Paul will spend the rest of this book - except for chapter 16 - arguing for. So that you cannot walk away from this book without saying to yourself, "I trust that God means what He says." Right? So you can leave with a certainty of the one truth that works have never been God's way of salvation. In fact, in the Old Testament, good works and good efforts are no way to salvation. No way at all. In chapter 4:6, Paul will quote out of Psalm 32 and use it as one example that God gives a status of salvation and justification and righteousness to those who believe in Him; that that has always been God's measuring stick. Right? Whether the law is the Mosaic law given to the Jews or whether that law is your conscience, that God has written upon it. Obedience to the law can save no one, and that's constantly what you will read in the Scriptures. By the deeds of the law no one will be saved. Paul write to the Galatians (3:10), "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them." If you messed up on one thing, you jumped, but you didn't make it. "For by grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves" (Ephesians 2:8). One of those hinges on the door of eternal life is you can't do it.

But notice verse 21. "But now the righteousness of God" - the right standing with God - "apart from the law is revealed" by the Lord or made known by the Lord. A way for sinful man to be right with Him, apart from performing the law which had

never the intent of performance anyway and which should just leave you kind of pulling the pockets out of your pants and saying, "I don't have anything in here to give you!" but just turning yourself to the Lord. Thank God He has a plan. There's a great verse, and maybe you haven't read it recently, but when David had his problems with his son, Absalom, who was really banned for many things, but, needless to say, Joab, the head of his army, wanted to somehow reconcile the father with the son. And he used a woman there to come and tell David a story to get his reaction and then kind of say, "Well, that applies to you, buddy." And David wasn't a dumb guy. He goes, "Joab put you up to this, didn't he?" and she said, "Yeah, but it's still the right thing to do and that's really what the LORD wants." But she said to him in one place, "God doesn't take away life, but He devises a means by which His banished ones will not be expelled from Him." Or those who have been separated from Him won't be lost. God devises a means whereby you can come back. It's a great verse. It's in 2 Samuel 14:14. God devises a means so His banished ones will not be expelled. You're separated from God by sin, but He doesn't want to lose you. Not forever. So He came up with a plan, and the miracle of God for man is that a right standing with God is available apart from you doing the works because you can't live the perfect life like Jesus did. And if you can't, but He can, then your only hope, your absolute trust, you hang every dependence that you have upon His work.

So the first point is: righteousness is apart from the law or, if you will, right standing with God is available to you apart from the law.

Second of all, the way of righteousness has been revealed from the beginning. Notice what it says in verse 21. It is revealed, "being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets." Before He presents the means of receiving this right standing with God, Paul wants to point out that this isn't some new plan of God. In other words, this didn't just come up like, "Oh, we should fix this." No. Through the law that had been given way back in their history, through the Prophets, who had spoken over the centuries, and the closer you get to the gospels, the further you get revelation of the One that's coming, of the Savior. The truth, of course, is that directed primarily at the Jews whose whole religion centered on the Law and the Prophets. That's a phrase. Right? The words "the Law and the Prophets" refer to the entire Old Testament. It's all that God has given to the Jews. A common phrase. Yet the law was designed to point out our failures, and the law's insistence upon blood sacrifice reminded us of the cost. Right? "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). It's the way that we are able to even be brought into the presence

of the Lord. So if you read Isaiah, read Jeremiah, read the Prophets, go through the law, all of the ongoing sacrifices and rituals, all of the principles there, they were followed so that man might be accessible to God. But in every one of those, the suffering of the animal, his bloodshed, became a "*kaphar*," a covering. It didn't remove sin; just kind of covered it until the One who could remove it was coming. This was always God's idea. This didn't just come up. God's idea of forgiveness of men's sin - dependent upon His Messiah and His grace - had been at the forefront of what He had been doing. Turning to the Lord for help is thoroughly scriptural because the Old Testament was, "Turn to the Messiah who's coming," and the New Testament is, "Turn to Jesus who's come."

So there's a long history in God's Word that declares from generation to generation, through the Law and the Prophets, that the just should live by faith (Romans 1:17), that man has to turn to God for help. He won't be able to do it on his own. Isaiah wrote, in chapter 45:21, "Why don't you bring your case before Me?" And then he goes on to talk about, "How are you going to take counsel in your situation? I am a just God and a Savior. There is none besides Me." And He calls Himself a Savior. "I have righteousness, I have strength. And to those who come to Me, I will give it to them else they will be ashamed at My coming." So wherever you turn, God's plan has always been to make man righteous through faith in His work.

So, not only is righteousness not based upon performance or the law, it is a way of righteousness that God has had in mind since the very beginning.

Thirdly, this righteousness or right standing with God is acquired only through faith in His Son, Jesus. Only through His Son. Verse 22, the first part, "Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ." Paul clearly underlines what he's been saying since chapter 1:18. Human righteousness is flawed by sin and cannot and will not produce any salvation, but the saving righteousness you need God will give you. It is a gift to you, not a work from you. So you go to chapter 4:5, and it says, "To him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted" (to him) "for righteousness." In chapter 5:1, "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

There is a false faith. I mean, the Bible talks a lot about false faith. If you go to read John 8, there's a group of Jews who are very antagonistic to Jesus, but they



put on the appearance of believing, and they even say to Him, "We believe in You. We trust in You." But it wasn't a true faith. He chastised them for not having real faith because the faith that they said they had didn't produce obedience like Abraham. He said, "You're of your father the devil" is what He said. But they spoke of faith that certainly didn't exist. False faith can be faith in works, in ritual, in devotion, in religious experience, in a system, in one's own goodness, in some nebulous, "That's what I believe. I'm very strong in this. I'm a religious person." "What do you believe in?" "Yeah, I just believe in stuff." Not really saving faith. True faith is focused on a Person.....on a Person and not you. True faith is focused on Jesus, and it is much more than a mere verbal or mental affirmation of Him. Because the Bible says even the demons believe (James 2:19). So it's not like, "I agree He's around, He was real, and He came, He died, He rose." No. It is the affirmation of who He is and why He came. You know, that woman that followed Paul around and began to cry out (Acts 16:17), "These men are the servants of the Most High God, proclaiming to us the way of salvation." That's exactly what they were doing, but this woman was possessed by the devil. So even the devil believes.

True faith in Jesus, by definition the word "faith," "*pistos*" means to hang your entire body weight upon a hook. It doesn't allow you to have two buckets or three doors to choose from or two envelopes or two paths that you can follow. You've hung your entire hope upon one nail, if you will. That's the faith that God is looking to produce in our lives. Your hopes, your expectations, your acceptance of it is that the Lord has come and has sent His Son for you. True faith is an exercise of the will. I choose to put my trust in the Lord. When Paul wrote to the Romans, later on in chapter 6:17, he said, "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." It's a choice. Right? I choose - based on the evidence and the understanding of God's Word - to put all of my hope in the Lord. It is an exercise of my mind. I respond, I comprehend the truth, and I put my faith in Christ. The reason we know little children are going to go to heaven, and the Lord certainly teaches that in many places, is that there is no culpability when there's no understanding. But the minute you understand, now you're on the hook. So you should be on the hook because you're on it either way. Faith in Jesus brings God's gift of righteousness into your life, freely. We are "found in Him, not having my own righteousness, by the law, but by faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God by faith," Paul said to the Philippians (3:9). It's a huge truth that we need to understand: that righteousness with God is acquired only through faith in

Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ is all that we need. It is the only way to God that we have.

Righteousness is apart from the law, righteousness has been revealed from the beginning, righteousness is found only in faith as you turn to Christ, the solution.

Fourth point, righteousness is provided to everyone and anyone who would believe.

Verse 22, "to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." "To all and on all." Anyone who believes in Christ can be saved. When Paul preached in the Pisidian synagogue (Acts 13), and he was there preaching the gospel - and we don't get a lot of text of his sermons, although we get some - but he stood up, and he said, "everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses" (verse 39). In other words, you turn to Jesus, and God will make you right with Him, which you could never have done trying to keep the law. To the Galatians (2:16), Paul wrote, "A man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ." So Jesus made it clear. You can come, anyone can come, but they're all going to have to come to Him. Right? "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). So whether you're a murderer or a banker, whether you're religious or an atheist, no matter what color you are, what ethnicity you proclaim, what creed you believe in, no one's good enough to stand before the Lord on their own, and yet no one is outside the scope of Him being able to save you if you trust in Him. That's what the Word says. "To all and on all." All have sinned. All can be saved. One class of people: sinners. One way to heaven: Jesus Christ. Short formula. But it's a message that constantly is preached to us.

So, righteousness with God is required through faith in Christ. Righteousness is provided to anyone who would believe in Him.

Verse 24, this is the fifth point. Righteousness is given freely by His grace.

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." We are justified freely by His grace. When you're saved, no one is ahead of another in terms of, "Well, I'm in the kingdom, and you barely got in." No. We all just barely got in. It isn't like, "I belong here, but you don't. Welcome." No one saves themselves. All of us have to go to Jesus. And when we get there, all of us will meet His grace freely. Now the word "justified" is really important. Easy to remember. It means "just as if I'd never sinned." Justified. God, in His Son,

cleanses you so that you stand before Him sinless in the sense of responsibility or accountability. God will declare you righteous. It is God's legal declaration that all the demands of the law are fulfilled on the behalf of the believing sinner. In other words, you're given treatment as if you did everything right. But you didn't. You were given this standing freely. Justification changes the judicial standing of the sinner before God. Right? You were a sinner heading for judgment. And in justification, God imputes.....that's the big word, right, in the Bible. The word "impute" means to attribute or to assign or to credit or to deposit the perfect right standing of Jesus, who has never sinned, into your account, therefore justifying you. It's an immediate work of God. The minute you get saved, your slate's clean. You get Jesus' righteousness put into your account. You didn't earn this. You probably aren't living any differently than you did the day before you, but you have a new standing with God. That's an immediate action. Sanctification, which follows - which will also follow in the book of Romans - means that God takes this righteousness of Jesus - the way He lives holy life, dedicates Himself to the Father, not for me but for Him, He was my example - and He puts His Spirit in my life so that the righteousness of Jesus begins to be worked out in my life. I begin to look more like the One that I follow. He sets me apart. Sanctified. Set apart. The word "*hagios*" or saint. Same word. So that I might now live by His power and strength, and every day I'll move a little closer to being more like Him. Sanctification is not immediate. It's a lifelong process. Every day I take a little step closer to the Lord. I'm immediately justified. I'm in the process of being sanctified. In all of that, I've been saved. Righteousness is given to you freely. You don't earn this. It is given to you. And it's an absolute necessity you know that. Righteousness came from the Lord as a gift.

If a woman is caught shoplifting and arrested, if the store that she's caught in chooses to press charges, and she goes to jail or has to pay a fine, that would be justice. Right? The punishment would fit the crime. If they chose to cancel her debt and decided not to press charges, that would be forgiveness. They would decide to forgive her. If someone came and stood in her place and said, "I'll go to jail for her, charge me, I'll pay the fine, let her go free, let her walk away from this thing as if she is free and innocent," that's justification. And that's what God does with you. He treats you just as if you'd never committed those crimes. You're free. Grace looks pretty good then, doesn't it? And it is given to you freely. Right standing with God is a free gift of God given to whoever would put their faith in His Son. He makes the payment, you get the reward. I've always said - and I think

Pastor Chuck used to say it, too - it's such a lousy deal for the Lord. You get Him, He gets you. It just doesn't seem like the tradeoff is very fair.

Freely. Unmerited favor. Right? God gives to me, by His love, a solution for my hopeless plight that I've read about for three chapters - that I'm a sinful man, sinful woman, regardless of whether I'm a pagan or a religious person or a moralist. It doesn't make any difference. Remember we all jumped off the pier, and we're all swimming, and we all got wet.

End of verse 24, this is our sixth point. Righteousness is accomplished by redemption, notice. "Being justified freely by His grace through" (the process of) "the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." The work of God's freely-given grace that justifies man's sin is accomplished through the redemptive work of Jesus. The word "redemption" carries with it the idea of deliverance or payment of a price. It is most often used, in at least Greek literature, to pay the price to set a slave free. You buy him, and then you let him go. Right? You pay the price for him. A ransom for a slave, for a prisoner. Because of man's utter sinfulness and his inability to raise himself up to God's standards, Jesus comes to be the Redeemer of our souls. He comes to give His life for ours. He could do that because He's God....without sin. Though He is in a human flesh, He has come and lived the kind of life that we could never have lived because of our sinfulness. But then, because of His death, He can take the sins that we should have been paying for, and He can be the One that stands in the gap for us. So He pays the full price of our wickedness, and by His death, He provides a way that God can redeem us righteously. God didn't change the rule and say, "Well, I used to say the wages of sin is death, but since everybody sinned, I don't want to lose everybody. I just meant if they do bad stuff. Not little sins." No. God is the same. He can't change His character. So, for example, we read, in 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God - and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." He became the payment, if you will, for our sinfulness. He gave His life.

Eventually your soul is going to go to heaven. Ephesians 1:7. Right? "We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." So, you're going to heaven one day, and you'll be purchased. You're purchased now, and God has given you His Holy Spirit as a down payment (Ephesians 1:13-14). But one day, you're going to be picked up. The purchase price is going to deliver you to be with the Lord, if you will. And so your souls are going to go for all

eternity, and one day your body is going to be changed and go there as well. Which is why Paul said, in Romans 8:23, "We ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption," and then he says, "the redemption of our body." Same word. God saves you, pays the price for you, gives His Spirit to say, "You belong to Me, here's the down payment, I've given My Son for your sake, you belong to Me, you've been bought with a price." And then one day, the Lord comes, and He gathers together that which He has purchased, and that'll be you and me. So righteousness is accomplished through an act of redemption by the Lord.

And finally, verse 25 - the first part, "whom God set forth" (speaking of Jesus) "as a propitiation by His blood, through faith." The key to God making His righteousness available to all of man so that we might live with Him forever is found in these words about Jesus: God set forth His Son as a propitiation by His blood. The word "propitiation" means sacrifice. Sacrifice. So it carries the idea of satisfying the demands of a God. That's really the way the word is used in Greek. So, sacrifice, to atone or to appease or to satisfy the demands of a God. When it is used in terms of man's religion, it is always appeasing the demands of any god. When it's used in the New Testament to speak of your salvation, it is always used to appease the righteous demands of God for man. You'd better be perfect, and if you're not, then righteousness can be found and paid for by an atoning sacrifice. Jesus will redeem us, and all we do is then we look at how did He redeem us? He shed His blood.

In the Hebrew equivalent to propitiation is the word "*hilasterion*," which is a word that is used to describe the mercy seat in the Old Testament. You might remember that, in the Holy of Holies where the high priest would go in once a year to offer the sacrifices of atonement, there was an Ark of the Covenant. And on top of this Ark was a mercy seat. It had some angels with wings that were spread out - two of them - that covered it. It was on this little place above the opening, if you will, of the Ark of the Covenant where the blood would be shed once a year to cover the sins of man. Remember that one of the things inside was the breaking of the Ten Commandments. Right? Man had broken the law. God was providing mercy so that between man and Him, there would be a mercy seat. If you go to Exodus 25, you will see that it is there at the mercy seat that God made Himself known. The cloud came first from the mercy seat and covered that place lest the priest would go in and see the mercy seat; so the place was always filled with the smoke of the incense. So you couldn't really look upon it, but there in that marvelous place, God brought salvation. In Leviticus 16, there's the description of the blood

having to be sprinkled seven times upon the mercy seat to make atonement for the people. But it's all illustrative of the fact that Jesus was going to come and pay the price with His blood and pay a price for our salvation.

So, what stood between man and God and the breaking of the law? How do we get right with God? It's the blood shed as payment for our judgment so God might reconcile us to Himself.

In Jesus' death, the righteous demands of God against sin were met. He died. He paid the price, ultimately. Leaving Him free to be merciful to those who formerly merited only His judgments. So in the New Testament, Jesus becomes our mercy seat. It's the place we, having broken the law, go to find forgiveness. And His blood is shed, and His righteousness is then given to us.

So, when you read all of these chapters in this book early on, and then you get to the words, "But now," it really makes a big difference, doesn't it? Because you're left without hope until you get to verse 21, and then you read "righteousness is apart from the law." Righteousness has been God's plan from the beginning - to give it to you. It is found through faith in Jesus Christ. It is provided to all men who would look to Him and believe in Him. It is given freely to man by His grace. It is accomplished by a redemption, a payment, and that redemption is an atoning sacrifice. "But now." I was once blind, but now I see. I was lost, but now I'm found. I was once the object of God's wrath, but now I've been saved through God's gift in His Son. I've gone from wrath to righteousness, from condemnation to justification, from hopelessness to redemption - all through the work of Jesus. Good news.... "but now." Don't you think? "But now."

So, look, you're not gonna get to heaven doing whatever you think you need to do to get there. You only need to do one thing: you need to go make friends with Jesus. And you need to go and put your trust and your hope and your confidence in Him. And when you go out and share your faith, forget about everything that you might be sharing. Just preach the gospel. Sinfulness of man, the grace of God freely given, no other way that man can be saved - not by works. It's usually the big argument with folks when you go to share the Lord. It's usually stuck at number one. Right? The works of the law, the works of the law. "I'm pretty good, I did pretty well. If I don't make it to heaven, most people aren't gonna make it to heaven." Well, that's probably true, but that's hardly a comfort. All right. So I guess most people are going down with you. Is that what you're saying? We don't

want to admit that we need some help. Which is why, for three chapters, Paul just beat you over the head with sinfulness, sinfulness, sinfulness, sinfulness, sinfulness, religious sinfulness, moral sinfulness, perverted sinfulness.....dinky, dinky, dinky, dink. Jump from the pier. Jump from the pier. You're not gonna make it to Catalina.

Next week, we would like to give you the rest of it, beginning in verse 25 down through verse 31. I hope you won't miss because, to me, if you can get these things in your heart, you're gonna be a great tool that the Lord can use this year to share with others how they can go to heaven. It is God's wonderful plan for sinful man, who has no way out unless he turns to the righteousness of God that is given to us by faith in Christ. Amen?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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