

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY GRACE

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Today we are going to look at the subject of righteousness by grace. Romans 3:21-23 says, “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference [distinction]: For all have sinned, and come [fall]short of the glory of God.”

Notice that this scripture says, “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested.” I once asked a man, “What do you think you have to do in order to go to heaven?” He responded that he should keep the Ten Commandments, be faithful to his wife, live a moral life, plus a number of other things. I said, “Do you know what you have to do in order to go to heaven, to be in God’s presence or in His kingdom? You would have to have a righteousness that equals God’s righteousness.” He said, “I beg your pardon? There is no one who can have a righteousness that equals God’s. Only one man had such righteousness, and that was Jesus Christ!” I said, “You have the point! That is exactly right! None of us in our own selves have ever kept the law or the commandments perfectly, outwardly or inwardly, but we need a righteousness that equals God’s in order to be acceptable before Him.”

That is exactly what is said in verses 21-22, “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested . . . even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe...” The kind of righteousness that God offers you and me is a righteousness that is “through faith in Jesus Christ,” and it’s unto all and upon all that believe. There are two kinds of righteousness—the righteousness of man and the righteousness of God. The righteousness of man is his very best behavior and the good works he does, but that can’t make you acceptable before God. You need a righteousness that equals God’s, and He is offering it to you . . . the righteousness of God that is without the law.

In the Greek, there is no definite article, which means that this text is really saying God is offering His own righteousness without law. A righteousness that is according to law is a righteousness of doing, earning, and achieving in order to be accepted before God. All the world religions today think you have to do, earn, and achieve in order for God to accept you. The word “gospel” means “good news,” and the good news of the Gospel is that God is offering His very own righteousness and acceptance to all who will believe in what Jesus Christ provided—his death on the cross for our sins, imputing to us the righteousness that equals the law. This is the righteousness of God that is apart from the law, without us doing, earning, and achieving, and it comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

Notice in verse 22 that it is the righteousness of God that is through faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all. Why is God offering His righteousness to everyone? “For there is no difference [no distinction]: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” You have sinned, I have sinned, and we all come short of God’s standard of perfection. Because of our sin, the greatest thing we need is acceptance, right relationship, and right-standing with God . . . and God has offered this not through the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ.

The Bible says in Philippians 3:9, “ And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.” I don’t want to be found standing before God in my own righteousness. Isaiah 64:6 says, “ All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” It doesn’t say all of our sins are as filthy rags, but all of our righteousnesses, and in the Hebrew language in that context it refers to a menstrual cloth. That is how filthy and dirty our righteousnesses are.

The Bible tells in Hebrews 6 about the doctrine of the foundations of Christ. Just as it is necessary to lay a foundation before building a house, there are certain things in the Christian life that are foundational. The very first part of the foundation is to repent from dead works. Although I believe the Bible teaches that we need to repent from our sins, Hebrews 6 is not saying that but is saying we need to repent from our dead works.

What are dead works? They are anything we do or trust in to make us acceptable to God. We need to put all our good works in one pile, all our sins in another pile, and turn from them both to God for His mercy and forgiveness. Salvation is trusting Jesus Christ alone. In Romans 3:22 that we read earlier, He’s offering His own righteousness—the righteousness of God that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. It doesn’t come by your working, your trying, your earning, or your attempts to achieve; it comes through faith, dependence, and reliance upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Genesis 15:6 says, regarding Abraham, “ And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” How was Abraham saved? The Bible says he believed God—believed the promise God gave him—and righteousness was imputed to his account. The Apostle Paul argued this point when the Jewish people said they were saved by their works, by what they did. He says in Romans 4:23-25, “ Now it was not written for his [Abraham’s] sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

The fact that Abraham was declared righteous before God through his faith was not just for him alone. What we read in Romans 3:21-22 about a man being declared righteous through his faith in Jesus Christ was written also for us, anyone who will believe, trust, and rely on Jesus Christ. The Bible says that because of the payment He made on the cross when He shed His blood for our sin, righteousness (right-standing) will be imputed to any person’s account who simply believes in what Jesus has done.

Romans 5:17 says, “ For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” God is offering you a gift of righteousness, a gift of right-standing before Him. A gift does cost something but not to the person who receives it. If you gave me a gift and asked me to pay for it, it wouldn’t be a gift, but it did cost you something. God made righteousness available to you and me as a gift, and this gift of righteousness, acquittal, and right-standing before God comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

May God bless you as you consider these precious truths from God’s Word, that righteousness and right-standing before God are offered to you and me . . . to anyone who will believe, trust, and rely on the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. God bless you.

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY GRACE (Outline)

Romans 3:21-22: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; ²²Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.”

We need a righteousness that equals God’s in order to be accepted before Him. Because of our sin, the greatest thing we need is acceptance, or right-standing with God.

A righteousness that is according to the law is a righteousness of doing, earning, and achieving in order to be accepted by God.

The kind of righteousness that God offers us is a righteousness not according to doing or according to law but one that is through faith in Jesus Christ’s righteousness.

God offers this righteousness to all people because all have sinned and come short of God’s standard of perfection.

Philippians 3:9: “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

There are two kinds of righteousness:

1. The righteousness of man is the good works that he can do. It will not make him accepted by God.
2. The righteousness of God is God’s own righteousness. It is His acceptance of us based on our belief in what Jesus provided through His death on the cross: forgiveness of sins and imputing to us a righteousness that equals the law.

Isaiah 64:6: “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” Not our sin, but our righteousness, our good works, are as filthy menstrual rags.

Hebrews 6:1: “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.” We need to turn from our good works and our sin unto God for His mercy. Put your faith, dependence, and reliance in Jesus.

Genesis 15:6: “And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” This Old Testament scripture describes how Abraham believed God, Who then imputed righteousness to Abraham’s account.

Romans 4:23-25: “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; ²⁴But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; ²⁵Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

Righteousness will be imputed to your account also, if you believe in Jesus and what He did for you. You also have right-standing before God when you believe in Jesus.

Romans 5:17: “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”

God offers a GIFT of righteousness (right-standing before God). It cost God the life of His Son but is made available freely to us through faith in Jesus.

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY GRACE (Teacher's Guide)

1.
 - A. According to Romans 3:10, what does mankind need?

Righteousness.
 - B. Why? See Romans 3:23 and Ephesians 2:12.

Because we have all sinned and failed to meet the standard of God's perfection. Also because we are without Christ, being lost, having no hope and without God in this world.
 - C. Do you see why all of us need a Savior?

Yes.
2.
 - A. According to Titus 3:5, is the righteousness that we need, a righteousness that we can produce?

No, not by works of righteousness that we can do.
 - B. According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, what kind of righteousness do we need?

The righteousness of God (in Christ).
 - C. According to Romans 3:22, how do we receive this righteousness?

Through faith in Jesus Christ.
3.
 - A. According to Philippians 3:9, what is the righteousness of the law?

A righteousness belonging to me—a works righteousness that I can produce.
 - B. According to Philippians 3:9, how is the righteousness of God received?

Through faith in Jesus Christ.

4. According to Galatians 2:21, how could we frustrate God's grace?

The word "frustrate" means "to prevent from accomplishing a purpose or fulfilling a desire; to nullify." The word "vain" means "not yielding the desired outcome; to be unsuccessful."

We could frustrate God's grace by trying to be saved by our own good works instead of trusting Christ and His death for us for our salvation.

5 According to Romans 5:17, the righteousness of God is received as what?

A gift.

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY GRACE (Detailed Teacher's Guide)

Note: The following information may be read out loud (a numbered section at a time) with the person(s) being disciplined. After each numbered section is read, pause and ask the question(s) that correspond to the paragraph(s), and then discuss them.

¹ According to the Bible, mankind's greatest need is for righteousness, that is, to be in right-standing, or a right relationship with a holy God. WHY? According to Scripture, "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). God sees all men as lost, without hope, and without God in this world (Ephesians 2:12). We are sinners by nature through the fall of one man, Adam. It is also true that we are sinners by practice that is, our actions and deeds also fall short of the standard of God's perfection. You cannot say, "I am basically a good person" when the Scriptures declare, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and "there is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10).

Do you see that you need a personal Savior, one who will save you from your sins?

² God offers us, as a gift, the righteousness that we all so desperately need. This righteousness is not the righteousness that you can produce (Titus 3:5). Rather, it is a righteousness that equals God's righteousness (2 Corinthians. 5:21). It is God's own righteousness that He offers us freely through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22).

¹ (a) According to Romans 3:10, what does mankind need?

(b) Why? See Romans 3:23 and Ephesians 2:12.

(c) Do you see why all of us need a personal Savior?

² (a) According to Titus 3:5, is the righteousness that we need a righteousness that we can produce?

(b) According to 2 Corinthians 5:21, what kind of righteousness do we need?

(c) According to Romans 3:22, how do we receive this righteousness?

³ Notice what the scripture says, “ But now the righteousness of God WITHOUT THE LAW is manifested (that is, revealed)” (Romans 3:21). The first thing we notice here about God’s righteousness is that it is not derived from the law. There is no definite article in this verse; in the Greek text, this would indicate that the righteousness that God offers man is APART FROM LAW or THE PRINCIPLE OF LAW. Therefore this scripture may read, “ But now the righteousness of God without law is revealed.” AND WHAT IS THE PRINCIPLE OF THE LAW? The principle of the law says that men are accepted by God by doing, achieving, or meeting certain standards. SO IF MEN ARE NOT MADE RIGHTEOUS BY THE LAW, THAT IS, BY BEING AND DOING RIGHTEOUS ACTS, THEN HOW ARE WE MADE RIGHTEOUS BEFORE A HOLY GOD? Verse 22 of Romans 3 reveals the answer when it gives a description of the kind of righteousness that God offers - it is a by faith in Jesus Christ righteousness. These five words in the Greek text are a combined adjectival phrase, which modifies the righteousness of God. In other words, this phrase describes the kind of righteousness God offers by saying, it is a through - faith - in - Jesus Christ - righteousness that makes men acceptable before God.

⁴ Are you tired of dealing with guilt? Would you like to come to the Savior to be totally righteous and have right-standing with God? The blood of Jesus was shed to provide this gift for you (Ephesians 1:7). This is what the scripture says, “This gift is from God, and it is very important to me. Because if the law could have made us right with God, then Christ died for nothing” (Galatians 2:21, The Simple English Bible).

⁵ Have you ever considered repenting from your dead works? (See Hebrews 6:1.) Dead works are the things people trust in to get them to heaven. They may involve living a good life, keeping the Ten Commandments, loving others, and attending church, etc. Can you see that none of these things will meet the standard of God’s own righteousness? It will take God’s own righteousness to get you to heaven.

The Bible says, “ It is certain that death reigned over everyone as the consequence of one man’s fall (Adam), it is even more certain that one man, Jesus Christ, will cause everyone to reign in life who receives THE FREE GIFT THAT HE DOES NOT DESERVE, OF BEING MADE RIGHTEOUS” (Romans 5:17, Jerusalem Bible).

When we all stand before God we will be anything but innocent - we will be utterly guilty. Yet God in His amazing grace, offers to treat us as if we are innocent men because of the blood of Jesus shed for us (Romans 5:9).

³ (a) According to Philippians 3:9, what is the righteousness of the law?

(b) According to Philippians 3:9, how is the righteousness of God received?

⁴ According to Galatians 2:21, how could we frustrate God’s grace?

⁵ According to Romans 5:17, what is the righteousness of God received as?

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY GRACE (Discipleship Questions)

Read Romans 3:21-23.

1. Is the righteousness of God in accordance with _____ apart from _____ the law? (circle one)
2. According to verse 22, how do we attain the righteousness of God?
3. Who can have this righteousness?
4. What must we do in order to attain this righteousness?
5. Why did God offer this righteousness by grace/gift? (verse 23)

Read Philippians 3:8-9.

6. Works righteousness is _____
7. Faith righteousness is _____

Read Isaiah 64:6.

Apart from God...

8. What are we all like?
9. What is our righteousness like?

Read Genesis 15:6.

10. What did Abraham do in the Lord?
11. How was it credited to him?
12. Did Abraham have to perform in order to receive righteousness from God?

Read Romans 22-25.

13. For whose sake was verse 22 and Genesis 1:6 written for?
14. Imputed means credited, like to an account. So what shall be “imputed to us if we believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead”?
15. What two reasons was Jesus raised from the dead?
 - A.
 - B.

Read Titus 3:5.

16. Is the righteousness that we need a righteousness that we can produce?
17. According to _____ Christ saved us.
18. What two ways did this happen?
 - A.
 - B.
19. Did God give us His Holy Spirit abundantly sparingly through Christ?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

20. What kind of righteousness do we need?

Read Galatians 2:21.

“to set aside” is also translated “frustrated”

Frustrate means to prevent from accomplishing a purpose for fulfilling a desire; to nullify.

21. How could we frustrate God’s grace?
22. If you were able to attain righteousness from your works, what would have been the purpose of Christ going to the cross?

Exercise:

Look up the following scriptures and have the Holy Spirit guide you to a deeper truth about righteousness by grace.

23. What revelation do you have about righteousness by grace after having done this study and looked up the additional scriptures?

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY GRACE
(Discipleship Answer Key)

1. Apart from
2. Thru faith in Jesus
3. All who believe
4. We must believe
5. Because we have all sinned and fallen short of His glory. We need a Savior.
6. The law
7. Righteousness that is from God by faith
8. Unclean thing
9. Filthy rags
10. Believed
11. For righteousness
12. No, he just believed
13. For us
14. Righteousness
15. A. For our offenses
B. For our justification
16. No
17. His mercy
18. A. The washing of regeneration
B. The renewing of the Holy Spirit
19. Abundantly
20. God's righteousness
21. By relying on the law for righteousness
22. Vanity
23. What revelation do you have about righteousness by grace after having done this study and looked up the additional scriptures?

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY GRACE (Additional Information)

WHAT IS JUSTIFICATION?

It is a forensic term, opposed to condemnation. As regards to its nature, it is the judicial act of God, by which He pardons all the sins of those who believe in Christ, and accounts, accepts, and treats them as righteous in the eye of the law, that is as conformed to all its demands. In addition to the pardoning of sin, justification declares that all the claims of the law are satisfied in respect to the justified. It is the act of a judge and not of a sovereign. The law is not relaxed or set aside, but is declared to be fulfilled in the strictest sense; therefore, the person justified is declared to be entitled to all the advantages and rewards arising from perfect obedience to the law (Romans 5:1-10). It imputes or credits to the believer by God Himself of the perfect righteousness, active and passive, of His representative and Surety, Jesus Christ (Romans 10:3-9). Justification is not forgiveness of a man without righteousness, but a declaration that he possesses a righteousness, which perfectly and forever satisfies the law, namely, Christ's righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 4:6-8). The sole condition on which this righteousness is imputed or credited to the believer is faith in or on the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is called a "condition," not because it possesses any merit, but only because it is the instrument, the only instrument by which the soul appropriates or apprehends Christ and His righteousness (Romans 1:17, 3:25-26, 4:20-22; Philippians 3:8-11, Galatians 2:16). The act of faith, which secures our justification, also secures at the same time our sanctification; thus, the doctrine of justification by faith does not lead to licentiousness (Romans 6:2-7). Good works, while not the ground, are the certain consequence of justification (Romans 6:14, 7:6).

(1897 Easton's Bible Dictionary)

RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPUTED:

PART I

1. Predicted Isaiah 56:1, Ezekiel 16:14
2. Revealed in the Gospel Romans 1:17
3. Is of the Lord Isaiah 54:17
4. Described as:
 - A. The righteousness of faith - Romans 4:13, 9:30, 10:6
 - B. The righteousness of God, without the law - Romans 3:21
 - C. The righteousness of God by faith in Christ - Romans 3:22
 - D. Christ being made righteousness to us - 1 Corinthians 1:30
 - E. Being made the righteousness of God, in Christ - 2 Corinthians 5:21

PART II

1. Christ is the End of the Law for Romans 10:4
2. Christ called The Lord of Our Righteousness Jeremiah 23:6
3. Christ Brings in an Everlasting Righteousness Daniel 9:24
4. Is a Free Gift Romans 5:17
5. God's Righteousness Never to be Abolished Isaiah 5:16
6. The Promises made Through Romans 4:13
7. Saints
 - A. Have, on believing - Romans 4:5, 11, 24
 - B. Clothed with the robe of righteousness - Isaiah 61:10
 - C. Exalted in righteousness - Psalms 89:16
 - D. Desire to be found in - Philippians 3:9
 - E. Glory in having - Isaiah 45:24-25

PART III

1. Exhortation to Seek Righteousness Matthew 6:33
2. The Gentiles attained to Romans 9:30
3. Blessedness of Those who have Romans 4:6
4. The Jews
 - A. Ignorant of - Romans 10:3
 - B. Stumble at righteousness by faith - Romans 9:32
 - C. Submit not to - Romans 10:3

PART IV

1. Exemplified
 - A. Abraham - Romans 4:9, 22; Galatians 3:6
 - B. Paul - Philippians 3:7-9

Adapted from The New Topical Text Book.

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