

Level 1 Lesson 3

RIGHTEOUSNESS BY GRACE

By Don Krow

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*” (brackets mine).

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 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 who believe. There are two kinds of righteousness—the righteousness of man and the righteousness of God. The righteousness of man is a person’s very best behavior and the good works they do, 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*” (brackets mine). You have sinned, I have sinned, and we all come short of God’s standard or 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 righteousness of God 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.

How was Abraham (the Jewish forefather) saved? The Bible says he believed God—believed the promise God gave him—and then righteousness was imputed to his account. The fact that Abraham was declared righteous before God through his faith was not just for him alone. We read in Romans 3:21-22 that a man is declared righteous through his faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible says that because of the payment Christ 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 upon Christ.

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

Discipleship Questions

1. Read Titus 3:5. Is the righteousness that we need a righteousness that we can produce?

2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. What kind of righteousness do we need?

3. Read Romans 3:22. How do we receive this righteousness? _____
4. Read Philippians 3:9. What is the righteousness of the Law? _____
5. Read Galatians 2:21. How could we frustrate God’s grace?

6. Read Romans 5:17. The righteousness of God is received as what? _____

Scriptures to Use with Questions

Titus 3:5 – *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”*

2 Corinthians 5:21 – *“For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”*

Romans 3:22 – *“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.”*

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.”*

Galatians 2:21 – *“I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.”*

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

Answer Key

1. Read Titus 3:5. Is the righteousness that we need a righteousness that we can produce? **No.**
2. Read 2 Corinthians 5:21. What kind of righteousness do we need? **The righteousness of God (that comes through Christ).**
3. Read Romans 3:22. How do we receive this righteousness? **Through faith in Jesus Christ.**
4. Read Philippians 3:9. What is the righteousness of the Law? **A righteousness belonging to me—a works righteousness that I can produce.**
5. Read Galatians 2:21. How could we frustrate God’s grace? **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.**
6. Read Romans 5:17. The righteousness of God is received as what? **A gift.**

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DKM
10065 Sun Ridge Circle
Rogers, AR 72756
USA
delessons.org