

The Righteousness of God

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Date: 05 August 2012

Preacher: Neville Mellor

[0 : 00] Our Father, we thank you that you have spoken to us already in this service.

You've challenged us. And we pray, our Father, that your Holy Spirit will continue to bring a challenge to each one of us this morning. In Jesus' name, Amen. Well, thank you, Andrew, for this opportunity of speaking today.

And we're going to think about God's righteousness revealed. And it's a very wonderful part of Romans, the Epistle of Romans.

But before that, and I must apologise for my cold. I've had it for about a month now and it's nearly over, but it's still going to irritate me.

But bear with me on that one. But we're going to just have as an illustration to start with. And it's this. There was a Scottish house painter named Jock who was interested in earning a penny when he could.

[1 : 20] So he often thinned down the paint to make it go further. He got away with it for some time. But eventually, the Anglican Church at Heidelberg, and I've picked on that, had a big restoration job outside of it and outside of one of his biggest buildings.

Jock put his quote in for the work. Because his price was the lowest, he got the job. So Jock set about erecting the scaffolding, setting up the planks, buying the paint.

Yes, and I'm sorry to say, thinning the paint with water. Well, Jock was up on the scaffolding. Painting away, the job nearly finished when suddenly there was a horrendous clap of thunder.

The sky opened, the rain poured down, washing the thin paint off the walls of the church. Knocking Jock clear off the scaffold onto the lawn, amongst the gravestones, surrounded by the telltale puddles of thinned and useless paint.

Jock was no fool. He knew this was judgment from the Almighty. So he got down on his knees and cried, Oh God, forgive me.

[2 : 40] What should I do? And from the thunder, some people say was heard a mighty voice saying, Repaint, repaint, and thin no more.

And we've been challenged about sin today and the Ten Commandments and the only answer is Jesus Christ.

And of course, we need to repent, repent, and sin no more. But unfortunately, that doesn't always come our way.

And we need the covering of Jesus dying for us on the cross of Calvary to cover our sins and to pay for our sins.

Well, now with that illustration out of the way, let us look at this particular portion of Scripture. And in the first two and a half chapters of Romans, we've been looking at the ruin of the human race because of the sin and of our sinful natures.

[3 : 53] And Andrew Price has taken us through that very well in these last two weeks. And now we look at a new and glorious part of Paul's letter to the Romans. Instead of the grim story of sin and God's wrath, we turn to the wonderful news of God's great grace to sinners through the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now is two small words that introduce that reading you have on your sheet. You know, very often we've got to look at many of the bigger words in the Bible.

We have to carefully look at justification, redemption, faith, substitution, obedience, grace, and many others. But this reading today from Romans 3.21 introduces to those two words, But now something had happened as Paul is writing this letter.

It's a great turning point in God's dealing with the human race. But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify.

A change between the past state of sad affairs and the glorious present state is one that Paul himself had experienced.

[5 : 23] He experienced that as he walked along the road to Damascus.

And there he was going to persecute the Christian church. There he was going to stop this heresy from coming into being. And all of a sudden he was confronted by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was an enemy of Jesus, an enemy of Jesus' followers. But now he was being confronted by him. Paul was in great darkness. And Jesus appeared and revealed himself as the Son of God.

In a moment the scales fell off Paul's eyes. Jesus was alive. And that's a you and I need to really grasp. Jesus is alive.

And he lives in our heart as Saviour and Lord. His darkened heart was flooded with a new light. And Paul turned from the old life of pride, of prejudice and persecution.

[6 : 31] And you and I can have that pride and prejudice very easily in our lives. To a new life of serving Christ and his gospel. Like the blind man who had been healed by Jesus, Paul could now say, One thing I know, I was blind, but now I can see.

Yes. And as we think of this, we think of the first point you have on your sheet there, which says, but now. And this commences, Paul, new theme in Romans 3, 21 to 26.

But now the righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known. Not that we're all sinners and lost.

And that's still so, unless we have Jesus. But now, not a reference to time, but a change in the flow of the apostles' argument. He just ceases his first couple of chapters and then brings this in here.

Having shown the impossibility of gaining righteousness by human effort. Paul turns to explain the righteousness that God himself has provided.

[7 : 51] Yes, things are different. And things can be different for each one of us. There is hope because of what the Lord has accomplished. The incarnation, the life of Christ, Christ's death, the resurrection of Jesus, has changed everything.

Everything now is different as Paul writes this letter to the Roman church. And he brings out very definitely, But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known to which the law and the prophets testify.

Paul sets out God's grace to sinners who believe. John Stott, the British evangelist, who I met many, many years ago when he came out from England, but this is a statement he's made since then.

He says about these six verses, He says, After a long dark night, the sun had risen. A new day had dawned, and the world is flooded with light.

But a new righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known. And John Stott, who's mostly known, you've read many people who've read his books, he challenges that this statement has been made known.

[9 : 13] Righteousness. Having shown the impossibility of gaining righteousness by human effort, Paul turns to explain that righteousness comes from God only.

And we use the term righteousness of God, but it's really righteousness from God. God's righteousness coming upon the Christian, and making that Christian righteous, even amongst the sins that happen in our lives day by day.

And then we see, as we look down those few verses on your sheet there, only God is inherently righteous. And this is because it says this in Deuteronomy.

In Deuteronomy 32, 44, it says, He is the rock. His words are perfect, and all his ways are just.

A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is He. What a wonderful God we have, as was explained to us by Ruth this morning.

[10 : 26] Men and women fall woefully short of the divine standard of moral perfection. What is the divine standard? In Matthew 5, 48, Jesus says, Be perfect, and you and I can't be that.

Therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. But the gospel reveals that on a basis of faith, and faith alone, we can have this righteousness from our heavenly Father.

And as you look down those few verses in verse 21, apart from the law, and the Ten Commandments were brought out this morning to us there, and God's righteousness is entirely apart from the obedience of the law.

You and I can't obey all the law of the Old Testament. We can't come up to that perfection. But in Philippians 3, 9, it says, And be found in Him, having a righteousness of my own, that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God, and by faith.

And so the righteousness that we're looking for God to give us, only comes through a personal faith and walk with the Lord.

[11 : 54] And then it brings out in that verse 21, to which the law and the prophets testify. And you know, right down through the Old Testament, there's the testimony that Jesus was coming, the Son of God, was coming into the world to die for the world.

And it's there time and time again. And one of those that most likely Paul would have used from the Old Testament, and many others, would be from Isaiah 9, 6.

One that you hear and know a lot of, it comes to us mainly around Christmas time. From Isaiah 9, 6. And where does this righteousness come from, that you and I are seeking to have, that other people might see Jesus within us?

It comes in verse 22 there, on your sheet, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe. That's the important part, that we might believe and accept this ourselves.

A friend of some people that were here, of past days I mean, Dr. Leon Morris would have often preached in this pulpit, when he was a member of the church here, and he became a friend of many of the older people of this church.

[13 : 28] And Dr. Leon Morris, who often preached here, and personally known to us, suggests that these six verses, this verses 1 to 26, 21 to 26, is possibly the most important single paragraph, ever written.

So, when you go home, open this up again, read it again, and see what he's saying, to each one of us. Its key expression is, the righteousness of God.

Well now, in the second point, I want to bring out here, all have sinned, in verse 23, all have sinned, and fall short, of the glory of God.

It sums us up, very perfectly. There is no different, for all have sinned, and fall short, of the glory of God. All fail misery, to live up to the, to the divine standard.

We've all sinned. Just allow me to give, a personal testimony, of my own life, of some years back. When I was a young person, many, many years ago, of 16 years of age, I'd hadn't, I'd been to church for twice, for two weddings.

[14 : 50] I'd been to Sunday school, for six months, when I was six, and then left. And, I'd never read the Bible, I'd never had the Bible, read to me. There was a Bible, sitting in the corner, of our house, but no one read it, in our house.

And, at the age of 16, as I started work, a friend, who was also known as Neville, said to me, would you come, to St Mark's Youth Fellowship, with me tonight?

This is back in Bullongong. He said, I've got my eye on a blonde. And, so for, immoral, or moral support, I'm not quite sure which one, I, I, I went along with him.

I'd never, you know, didn't go to these places, these churches, church halls, and, I wonder what it would be all about. I usually went to the dance, or the picture show, or something like that, up to that stage.

And so we went that night, and it turned out to be, an interesting evening, and, unusually, I enjoyed it. And, I started to go back, after that.

[15 : 52] And, I started going to evening service, after that. And, six months later, I was more or less dragged off, to a, to a fellowship youth camp. And there, the gospel was really, presented and preached.

And, this particular verse, came out, very strongly. For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God. And over that weekend, that six months after, I'd gone to church, for the, really the first time, there, I came to know Jesus Christ, as my Saviour and Lord.

My whole life, had to change. And, this is why, this particular, portion of scripture, which says, all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

We need to acknowledge that, and have Jesus, living in our heart, as Saviour and Lord. Well, about ten years later, after that, as I was a, an assistant minister, in a, in a church, in Hurstville, Sydney, the, evangelist Dr Billy Graham, came, to Sydney, and came to Melbourne as well.

Came to, all of Australia. And, there, our church became involved, in the, Billy Graham crusade. We hired a bus, for the whole six weeks, six nights a week, and Sunday afternoon.

[17 : 09] And, we took, hundreds of people, into the, crusade. We, got 300 referrals, back to our church, and we were to, follow them up, the, the church staff, and the, lay leaders of the church.

And, one of the verses, we'd follow them up on, one of the first verses, all have sinned, and come short of, the glory of God. And, it was a glorious opportunity, to just, reach people.

I, one particular family, came in, from right outside. A mother and father, and a son, 21 year old son, called Bob. And, they linked with the church, they became really, a part of the church.

They accepted Christ. They were born again. And, some time later, Bob, graduated as a, aviation engineer. And, this Bob White, became, a member of, Missionary Aviation Fellowship.

He came right from outside, accepted Christ, became a member of, Aviation Fellowship. Worked, I believe, at Ballarat, for many years, in doing, servicing planes, and training people, for the work, in New Guinea.

[18 : 17] And so, this particular verse, became, very important, there. And, there's, a real need for us, to look at this verse, and to know, how it speaks, to us, at this time.

And then, we go a bit further down, and we say, there, in verse, 24, and, are, justified, freely. We are sinners, but we are justified, because, Jesus Christ, has died, upon the cross, of Calvary.

This legal, forensic term, comes from, the Greek word, for righteousness, which declares, that we, are righteous, in God's, sight.

The verdict, includes, pardon from, guilt, and pardon from, the penalty, of sin. Isn't it wonderful, to know, that our sins, are forgiven.

They can be, in the past. We can still be tempted, but they can be, in the past. God declares, the sinner righteous, solely on the basis, of the merits, of Christ's, righteousness.

[19 : 28] I'm going to ask, Graeme, to just put a, slide on now. And it's a slide, showing when, Nancy and myself, went to South America, with the, South American, Missionary Society.

It's a slide, of Bruce Halliburton, and the church, there at Conception, a very, wonderful, outreaching church, reaching out, to the people, around them.

And then, we'll just, take the next slide, as well. And this one, Bruce, who was standing, with me, and we were looking, at this open air meeting, happening in Conception, Chile.

And he said, see that young man there, nicely dressed, with that jacket on, the one that's got a bit, a bit of beef on, in the centre there. He said, that's Alberto.

And he said, Alberto, had been a thug. He'd been a drug pusher. He'd been a pimp. And some people might say, what's a pimp?

[20 : 27] Well, one who controls prostitutes. He came out, one evening, to the, to the open air meeting, there in Conception, with the intention, of interjecting, and breaking up, the open air, gospel meeting.

And while there, while he was thinking, what he'd do, all of a sudden, as the Lord gripped, Paul, along the road, to Damascus, the Lord gripped, Alberto.

And Alberto, there, stopped, and listened. And he heard, that he was a sinner. He needed saving. He needed a saviour. And Alberto, afterwards, came and spoke, to Bruce Halliburton, the missionary there, and said, what can I do?

What can I do about this? And together, they knelt down, and Alberto, accepted Christ, the saviour and Lord. His life was changed. And there he was.

That was a few weeks, or a few months before, that happened, that I was there. And there he was, there as a witness, in the open air meeting, to the people around him.

[21 : 31] And he received, obtained a job, a worthwhile job, and now, he was witnessing, for the Lord. Yes, all have sinned, and come short, of the glory of God.

Down further on that, same, verse 24, redemption. redemption. It mentions there, the image, behind the, Greek word, comes from the, ancient slave market.

It means, paying the necessary ransom, to obtain a prisoner's, or slave's release. And God, has redeemed us, through the precious blood, of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He has paid the price, and we are saved, through him. Well, just quickly bringing this, because I've mostly, spoken long enough, to a close, this third point there, on your sheet.

God presented Christ, as a sacrifice, of atonement, through the faith, in his blood. And this is where, yes, Leviticus does tie in here, because it speaks about, the day of atonement, we'll do that in a moment.

[22 : 42] This great sacrifice, was not accomplished, in secret. But God, publicly, displayed his son, on the cross, of Calvary, for you, and for me.

The father, and the son, determined it, should happen. And by, the death of Christ, by Christ, satisfied, the justice of God, he paid the penalty, for your sin, and my sin, upon the cross.

And the reason, for Christ's death, sacrifice, on the cross, is that God, wanted to show, that he is both, righteous, and at the same time, is the one, who can, declare sinners, righteous.

And he can, declare us, righteous, in his sight. And in 1 John 2, it says, he is the atoning, sacrifice, for our sins.

Not only for, for ours, but also for the sins, of the whole world. There was no other way, our sins had to be paid for, because God's great love, he gave the gift, of his own dear son, who took our place, bore our sins, and died our death.

[24 : 00] And in 1 John 4, 10, this, this, is, love, that we love, not that we love God, but that he loved us, and sent his son, as an atoning, sacrifice, for our sins.

And in that, Leviticus reading, without going into detail, the, high priest, uh, was to, uh, go to the, um, uh, the seat of atonement, uh, in the Ark of the Covenant, he was to sprinkle the blood, of the slain, uh, bullock, onto that, and that was to take away, the penalty of the sin.

And of course, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, God himself, gave his life, that you and I, might be forgiven, the sins that we commit, and that we might have, the righteousness of Christ.

But now, the righteousness of God, is given to us, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all who believe, and trust, in him.

Let us take these, few verses away, and let us, thank God, that we can receive, forgiveness of our sins, we can receive, the righteousness of Christ, upon ourselves, because Jesus, has died, in our stead.

[25 : 24] Lord, speak to us, individually, that each one of us, might know Jesus, as Saviour, and Lord. In Jesus name, Amen.

Amen.