

God's Righteousness In Romans – Part 5

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In the book of Romans, God's righteousness is revealed by the unrighteousness of sinful humanity. God is justified in His righteousness to unleash His wrath against all sin. It is unleashed without any partiality to Jews and Gentiles alike. The Law was not an advantage to the Jews either. It only served to further illustrate the unrighteousness of the Jews. All of this Paul has maintained in the first three chapters of the book and it is important that these points made (be sure to go back and read the previous articles) be remembered because we have to appreciate where we have been in order to appreciate what we now have in Christ.

If God was shown by Paul to be righteous by His response to the unrighteousness (sin) of men in judgment (1:18–3:20), He is now shown to be righteous by His response to man's sin in providing salvation (3:21–5:21). Just as God is just in judging men impartially, He is also just in saving men impartially. In this section, God's righteousness is revealed by the gospel, since the gospel is the good news of God's salvation in Jesus Christ, apart from man's works, and in spite of man's unrighteousness. The amazing grace of God is now at work.

Because the Law could not produce righteousness, but could only expose man's unrighteousness, God provided a righteousness for men that is not dependent upon man, but has been accomplished in Jesus Christ. This righteousness is described initially in Romans 3:21-31. The righteousness God has provided is that which Jesus Christ accomplished, a righteousness based upon His person and His work. If God is to save men in a way that demonstrates His righteousness, He must first deal justly with man's unrighteousness. He cannot bestow righteousness upon unrighteous men without first removing their unrighteousness. This He accomplished by the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. He bore the wrath of God which God's righteousness required. And then, having satisfied God's righteous wrath (a process known as propitiation, see 3:25), He declares all those who believe in the redeeming work of Jesus righteous before Him.

This righteousness is that which men receive as a free gift. Praise God for His magnificent gift of grace. And it is worth repeating that our being made righteous by God is not the result of human effort or perfect Law-keeping. The beauty is that since this righteousness is independent of man's works, and since it is offered to both Jews and Gentiles alike, men have nothing to boast about when they are declared righteous. In saving men in this way, the righteousness of God is revealed, just as in His condemnation of men.

Paul makes it very clear. The unrighteousness of mankind of all stripes ran deep. The ungodliness of mankind turned God's beautiful creation into something ugly. It is a process that continues to this day and all of us stand ugly before God because of sin. No one is exempt. God is a holy and righteous God and His wrath is justified against all of us. That's where Christians WERE. But God's righteous wrath found another way to deal with sin instead of destroying us. That wrath destroyed His own Son, Jesus, on the cross as the sacrifice for our sins. God did that for us. He dealt with our sins because we couldn't. Our salvation is not based on our perfect law-keeping but solely on God's grace. And as Paul will point out, ours is a faith response to grace.