

ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH
GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS & MAN’S REBELLION – Chapters 1-3

LESSON 13 – THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD – Romans 3:21-31

As we finish chapter 3, we see that Paul reveals everything someone needs to know to receive and experience the righteousness of God. God has done a work for us that we can never do, and has given that to us as a gift. God has freely provided His righteousness for mankind.

Paul tells us in this section of Romans that the righteousness of God has been revealed in Jesus. Before Jesus there was judgment...now there is justification!

“This passage is not only the heart of Romans but the heart of the New Testament.”
- Donald Grey Barnhouse

The Reality of Divine Righteousness

In verses 21-26, Paul gives us the characteristics of divine righteousness.

Divine Righteousness Is Apart from the Law

Paul reminds the Roman readers that God’s righteousness is independent of the law as a condition for becoming righteous. The law revealed sin but could not provide the power to cleanse it. The law is like a mirror. It can show you that your face is dirty but it can’t take you to the sink to wash.

Paul said he had faulty righteousness when he put all his trust in the law but then he received true righteousness in Christ.

Divine Righteousness Is Affirmed by the Old Testament Scriptures

Paul reminded the Romans in chapter 1 verses 1 and 2 that he was “Set apart for the gospel of God—the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” The key verse of Romans...1:17 “The righteous will live by faith” ...is a quote from Habakkuk 2:4.

The Old Testament speaks to the righteousness of God in Christ. Jesus Himself said that the Old Testament testifies of Him.

John 5:39-40 & 46 “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me.”

Divine Righteousness Is Accepted by Faith

As you would expect, faith is very prominent in this entire passage...

“Through faith in Jesus Christ” verse 22

“To be received by faith” verse 25

“The one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.”
verse 26

“A person is justified by faith” verse 28

“Justify by faith and through that same faith” verse 30

“Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith” verse 31

Charles Spurgeon defines faith like this...“Faith is believing that Christ is what He is said to be, and that He will do what He has promised to do, and then expect this of Him.”

Divine Righteousness Is Available to All Who Believe

God will give His righteousness to all who are willing to believe. No one is outside the reach of His righteousness! There is no distinction made among those who are saved because there is no distinction made among those who are lost. Outside a relationship with Christ, all are guilty before God in their sin.

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Divine Righteousness Is Accomplished Through Divine Substitution

Because as Christians we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus, God no longer sees our guilt...only the blood of the perfect Sacrifice.

The Remedy of Divine Righteousness

It Eliminates Human Pride

Verses 27-28, “Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. Because of what law? The law that requires works? No, because of the law that requires faith. For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.”

It Eliminates Human Prejudice

Verses 29-30, “Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too, since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.”

It Eliminates Human Presumption

Verse 31, “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.”

As we conclude this lesson on receiving God’s righteousness by faith, it is important to remember that justification by faith does not do away with the importance of the law.

Faith upholds the law by putting it in its proper place in God’s divine purpose. The function of the law is to expose and condemn sin. Salvation by faith in Jesus justifies those the law condemns.