

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST (vv. 22, 25, 26)

22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, ^m through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith.

26 he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

1. Paul begins his exposition of the gospel in Romans with the simple declaration, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. ¹⁷ For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith (Romans 1:16-17).” He returns to subject of faith throughout the book of Romans and highlights it on three different occasions in our short passage. What do each of these references teach us about faith in Christ?
2. How would you describe the kind of faith Paul has in mind?
3. How is this faith in Jesus different from simply believing a few facts about Jesus?
4. What do you think Paul has in mind when he describes “a righteousness that is by faith from first to last?”
5. What is the most important thing you’ve learned about the righteousness of God in our study?
6. How will knowing this enrich your walk with Christ?



LIFE



DEATH



RESURRECTION



REIGN

THE RIGHTEOUS OF GOD & THE CROSS OF CHRIST

ROMANS 3:21-26

“Righteous” is a crazy word. When you watch the X-Games and see someone grabbing big air, doing all kinds of crazy aerobatics and then nailing the landing, it would not be unusual for the commentator to jump out of her seat, and exclaim, “Whoa, that was righteous.” She has in mind, of course, the beauty, audacity and sheer perfection of what we just witnessed.

In church circles “righteousness” feels a little bit more confining. No matter how precisely we define the term, there will always be undertones of “self righteousness.” It brings to mind people who are smug, condescending and for some reason or other think they are better than the rest of us. Somehow we imagine God might be a bit like them. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Few concepts in Scripture are more wonderfully complex than the righteousness of God. There is not a single English word that even begins to do it justice. When the Bible speaks of the righteousness of God, it can have in mind the beauty and perfection of his character, his mighty acts of deliverance on behalf of his people, or how men and women, who are as far from God as they could possibly be, can have a meaningful relationship with him.

While the righteousness of God is on display in the Old Testament, it is far more vividly on display on the cross. Few passages bring us to the intersection of “God’s Righteousness” and the “Cross of Christ,” with the depth and beauty of Romans 3:21-26.

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THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD APART FROM THE LAW (vv. 21-22)

21 But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. 22 This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

1. Paul tells us in verse 20, “no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law.” Why is this true?
2. What does Paul tell us the Law can do, and cannot do?
3. What are some of the ways God’s righteousness is revealed through the Law and in the Old Testament story?
4. Have someone read Exodus 34:6-7. What are two things we learn about God from this passage?
5. How can someone “forgive sin and rebellion” and “not let the guilty go unpunished?”

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD AT THE POINT OF OUR DEEPEST NEED (vv. 22-24)

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

1. We all have a gospel. Our gospel revolves around the answer to two big questions: “What is wrong with me?” and “How can I make it right?” What are some of the false gospels that people tend to put their hope in?
2. According to Paul, “What is wrong with us?”
3. What do you think Paul has in mind when he tells us all “fall short of the glory of God?”

4. How does it change the way we think about sin, when we define sin as falling short of the glory of God?
5. According to Paul, “How can we make it right?”

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD ON DISPLAY IN CHRIST (vv. 25-26)

25 God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, ^m through the shedding of his blood—to be received by faith. He did this to demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished—²⁶ he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

1. How does Paul describe Christ in these verses?
2. While some translations read “God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement (NIV, CSB, NRSV),” other translations read “Whom God presented as a propitiation (NASB, ESV, NKJV),” still others read “whom God presented as an expiation (RSV).” Propitiation involves the turning back of God’s wrath. Expiation involves the removal of sin. “A Sacrifice of Atonement” compares what Christ accomplished on the cross to Israel’s “Day of Atonement.” How do each of these ideas and images contribute to our understanding of the cross?
3. What are some other things that Christ accomplished/demonstrated on the cross?
4. How does the cross reconcile the tension between God’s justice and his mercy?