***The Righteousness of God
RO05-02***

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Please open your Bibles to Romans 1:17. Our subject, of course, is the rallying cry of the Reformation: "Justification by Faith."

This is actually the theme of the whole book of Romans – justification by faith in the God-man Jesus Christ, by the acceptance of His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, in payment for the sins of sinners, and apart from any human works on the part of the sinner. This is a magnificent truth recorded here in Romans to the Christians in the city of Rome.

Following the ascension of Constantine to the throne of the Roman Empire, Christianity became an accepted religion. It was no longer under the persecution of the Roman Empire. And as a matter of fact, it became the accepted state religion of the Roman Empire. By that time, and very rapidly after that, Christianity was very quickly diluted with the Babylonian mystery religions, and all kinds of perversions and confusions (distortions) were brought into the Christian viewpoint, so that the result was a religious system, which we know today as the Roman Catholic Church, completely divorced from the authority of the Word of God.

In short order, the Roman Empire, in the fifth century, came to an end. With that downfall of the Roman Empire, there descended upon all of the known world a blanket of darkness – a blanket of the most horrendous spiritual darkness that deepened as the centuries went by. It went on for hundreds of years. It went on beyond 1,000 years: as much, possibly, as 1,200 years. You can hardly imagine human beings living over that many centuries with absolutely no grasp of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The Roman Catholic system was now thoroughly mixed with its Babylonian background cults. For example, the mother-and-child Babylonian cult brought the mother called Mary and the child called Jesus. The worship of many gods was brought into the Roman Church under the guise of adoration (veneration) for a number of saints. The use of sprinkling of holy water in the Babylonian cult was brought in and given a Christian interpretation and meaning. The commemoration of the Feast of Ishtar was brought in – the resurrection of Tammuz, the son of the Babylonian goddess. This converted into Easter and the resurrection of Christ. Right down the line, all of the Babylonian superstitions and the demonic viewpoint was brought in to what was called Christianity, and imposed upon the masses of people.

So, for centuries, millions of souls went out into hell. They had no chance. They had no way of knowing the truth. The darkness deepened as the centuries went by. And men, knowing that they were sinners, in desperation, tried all kinds of things to appease a God that they did not know; a God that they completely misinterpreted; and, a God that they label as a mean, cruel despot who wanted them to punish themselves so they would destroy their bodies in one way or another, just exactly the way people in jungle primitive places today do, in order to try to gain the favor of some kind of a god that they feel is out there. It was a terrible time to be born. There just was no enlightenment as the centuries rolled by. There was only darkness.

The verse that we are going to study now was the first shaft of light in that blanket of gloom and darkness that began illuminating the Middle Ages, and finally burst forth like a magnificent sunrise upon the human mind. And once again, people knew how God had provided for their sin, and how God was able to take them into heaven, and still be righteous Himself when he did it – how a holy God could take a sinner into His heaven forever without Himself sinning in the process. This verse is the verse that changed the direction of human history. This is the verse that led us away from the darkness of the Roman Catholic Church as it exists even to this day; famous evangelists notwithstanding, giving us the impression that there is a ground of fellowship that is false, and it is deceptive. It is this verse that brought us to the enlightenment that enables us to sit here today and know what people over the centuries would have given anything to know.

**The Gospel**

This is the plan of salvation. It is known as the gospel. It is the grace offer of the gift of eternal life. Romans 1:16, which we looked at in the last session, presents the theme of justification by faith in a nutshell. That is the gospel as God's power of salvation to everyone who believes it. The rest of the book of Romans explains this primary theme.

Paul feels obliged to carry the gospel to Rome. He eagerly anticipates doing this following the arrival of the book of Romans which he is sending on ahead. He is not ashamed to tell the unbelievers the gospel, even though they may scoff at it, because he says, "It is God's power for a human being to obtain eternal life. This power from God is appropriated simply by believing the gospel. Faith (meaning trust) is the key that unlocks the door to eternal life. The natural man, we are told, in his lost condition has spiritual blindness upon his eyes. Therefore, when you give him the gospel, until he is enlightened by God the Holy Spirit, his reaction to what you tell him is summed up in the word "foolishness." The Bible says that the natural man does not have a spiritual capacity (meaning a human spirit) by which to receive the gospel, nor anything else in the way of spiritual phenomena. Therefore, when you bring him the gospel, he considers it foolishness.

So, the apostle Paul knew what it was to come up against people who scoffed at him; who smiled at him; and, who condescendingly told them that they'd listen to him another time, and then moved on. But at the same time, many believed: the high and the mighty; and, the low and the unimportant. They believers and entered the family of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18-21 and 1 Corinthians 2:14 describe for us the natural reaction of the unbeliever toward the gospel as foolishness.

Jews and gentiles who do not believe the gospel and (thus) become Christians will spend eternity in the lake of fire as 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 tell us. There is no place else you can go if you reject this gospel. Everybody who is born into the human race is born spiritually dead. Therefore, he is separated from God. He is under the penalty of eternal death because his human spirit is dead. Satan substitutes rationalism; emotional experiences; human good; morality; wealth; fame; and, social prestige for what the Bible offers as justification by faith. Satan, the Bible tells us, actually blinds people to the gospel. 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 and 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 describe this work of Satan in order that people would not understand, and thus believe the gospel.

Therefore, many people today who are people of importance; who carry prestige; who are people of wealth; who have fame; and, who have a place of great respect in the community of the world – these people are looked upon as being very important in human society, and thus as being very important with God, but they are not. Be they Jew or gentile, if they have not received this gospel, which many call foolishness, they can go no place else from their place of importance in this world except into the lake of fire.

**Religion**

Religion is Satan's game to make people think that they have some kind of relationship to God (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). I want to stress to you again, for your own personal guidance and your own personal witnessing, that when people rejected the gospel, the apostle Paul moved on.

**Mars Hill**

We have this, for example, in Acts 17:22-34. In this passage, you'll find described Paul's experience of standing on Mars Hill in the city of Athens, which was an outstandingly intellectual city. It had great philosophers, and was a city of great discernment and learning. All over on every street corner, the apostle Paul saw signs to various gods. And the Athenians, because they did not want to possibly miss a god that they had not become acquainted with, set up an altar, and underneath it, they placed the title: "To the unknown God." That way, they were sure they covered everybody. The apostle Paul walked up to that altar, and made reference to it in his speech on Mars Hill. He said, "I want to tell you about the unknown God. You have many gods that you are acquainted with here in the city. This is one you do not know," and promptly proceeded to tell them about the true and living God. And they stood and gave him a respectful hearing. This was the place where men of intellect gathered to study. They gathered to hear something possibly new, and to advance their knowledge.

They listened to him, verse 32 says, until he came to a very critical word. Let's look at verse 31 first: "'Because He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness. By that man (that is, Jesus Christ) whom He has ordained, concerning which He has given assurance unto all men, in that He had raised Him from the dead.' And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, and others said, 'We will hear you again of this matter.'"

Up to this time, they sat respectfully and silently listening. When he talked about a human being being raised from the dead, no intellectual Greek philosopher would entertain such a thought for one moment. It was axiomatic among the Greek philosophers that when a human body died, it was gone, and it would never live again. They knew that by reasoning; they knew that by every possible exercise of rationalism; and, they knew that a human body could never rise again.

So, when he said that, suddenly there was a murmur around the crowd. And there was looking at one another, and the casting up of the eyebrows, and the crowd immediately began to break up. What did Paul do? Did he start screaming and shouting, "Wait a minute: don't leave? You don't understand." Did he run in front of them and grab them and say, "Do you want to go to heaven, or don't you?"

The next verse tells you exactly what he did? He stood up there, and when he said the critical word "raised Him from the dead," the crowd broke up; they smiled at one another; and, they left him and said, "We'll listen to you another time, fella."

In verse 33, what did Paul do? "So, Paul departed from them." That's what he did. When somebody tells you that you're an idiot, and that you're talking foolishness when you speak to them about the gospel, you make your point, and then you turn around and you walk off. You have presented the testimony. You have evangelized. The rest is up to God the Holy Spirit. It is not up to you to try to change their negative volition. It is up to them themselves to change their own negative volition. Paul departed from them.

However, I want you to notice verse 34: "Nevertheless, certain men joined him and believed, among whom were Dionysius, the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them. But the point is that some people will believe you. Some people will take your message, and they will go positive to it. Our job is not to be ashamed of the message. And that's what Paul was saying in Romans 1:16: "I am not ashamed of the gospel." Why not? Because it is the power of God that can change a human soul's destiny from hell to heaven.

The following chapter, Acts 18, gives us another example of the same thing. In the first 11 verses, you again have Paul, but this time, speaking to a group of Jews in a synagogue. Again, he presents the same message – the power of the gospel. We're told that he presented the fact that Jesus was the Christ (He was the Messiah). He finally brought it out in so many words to the Jews in the synagogue. After he had explained the fulfillment of Scripture by Christ, he said, "I want to tell you that Jesus, whom our fathers (our leaders) crucified, was the Messiah. He was the one we were looking for.

Verse 6 says, "And when they opposed themselves." Notice that they did not oppose Paul. Now, they may have called him dirty names. They may have shook their fist at him, but the Bible recognizes that they were not opposing Paul any more than when you oppose somebody who is giving you the truth of God's word – you're not opposing that individual. If it is God's truth, you are opposing yourself: "When they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment and said unto them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads. I'm clean. From now on, I will go unto the gentiles.'"

**They Blasphemed**

Well, one of the things you know that they did do, they used foul language concerning Jesus Christ. They call Jesus Christ all kinds of blasphemous names. That's what this means here. They blasphemed. They blasphemed Jesus to show Paul what they thought about Christ as the God-man.

Paul said, "Well, enough. I've spoken to you in this city. I now turn to gentiles. And he departed from there, and entered into a certain man's house named Titus Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next to the synagogue."

But notice verse 8 again: "And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

Then the next verses tell us how the Lord appeared in a vision to Paul and encouraged him. He said, "Keep it up. Don't be ashamed of the gospel. Keep pronouncing it, because I have many people whom I'm going to bring into the family of God, and all you have to do is keep telling the story."

So verse 11 tells us that he continued there for a year and six months, in this gentile's house, teaching the Word of God among them. Notice: teaching Bible doctrine among them.

So, it is important for us to pick up the pattern from New Testament evangelism – that when people reject a gospel of which we are not ashamed, and which we are quite ready to explain to them – that when they reject it and go negative, there is nothing more that we can do except to move on to the next person, to find the one who's going to go positive; and, not to take it in any personal way as a matter of your personal distress, outside of the fact that it is always distressing to see people putting their lives (putting their eternity) into the lake of fire. We lose to negative volition; we gain with positive response.

So, Romans 1:17 explains to us why the gospel is the power of God. It begins with the word "For," which is again the Greek word gar, which is a particle introducing the reason that the gospel is the power of God for securing eternal life. It says, "In it," which indicates "placed where." It is two little Greek words. The Greek word "en," and the word "enautos." This is indicating the place where the power of God is to be found. It is referring back to verse 16; namely, the power that is to be found in the gospel.

**The Righteousness of God**

The reason the gospel is powerful, and the reason the gospel is capable of taking a person from a destiny in hell to a destiny in heaven is because the gospel message reveals something very critical about God. That's the main thing we want to study in this current session. And that is the righteousness of God (the "dikaiosune"). "Dikaiosune" is the Greek word for righteousness.

In the Greek Bible, there is no definite article. The word "the" not there. So, it is "*a* righteousness" that is referred to here. There are different kinds of righteousness in the experience of mankind. This righteousness is defined as belonging to God. In this thing (the gospel), it is a righteousness of God – one that God possesses. It is one that is definitely belonging to Him. This righteousness refers to a purity of mind, or a rectitude of conduct. It means doing always what is right, and doing what is just. The word "righteousness" simply means absolute perfection in doing what is right – never doing that which is sin.

**Human and Divine Righteousness**

Now, there is human and divine righteousness. That's the first thing to learn. And they are two different things. This is *a* righteousness of one kind; namely, the kind that belongs to God. But there is another righteousness which belongs to human beings. The mistake that people make, and that you have to clarify for those that you want to witness to, is that there are two different kinds of righteousness in the world, and they are not the same thing. They are totally different.

**Human Righteousness**

The righteousness of human beings is short of perfection. That is the righteousness that most people think of when they think of righteousness. But when they talk about God's righteousness, they say, "Well, it's the same thing, only it's absolutely perfect." So, human righteousness is viewed as a lesser form of divine righteousness. That is wrong. Human righteousness is not a lesser form of divine righteousness.

In other words, they view it like this: something like a thermometer. And up here, say, is a scale of 100, and down here is the scale of zero. And they view righteousness as just being the same for God and man. And they think that man's righteousness comes up to a certain level, like maybe the 50% level, but God's righteousness always hits 100. So, righteousness is viewed as simply different degrees on a scale measuring the same thing. Since people recognize that they fall short of perfection, they somehow think that God has to do part of getting them into heaven and they do part.

In other words, here is a criminal that's been put into prison for life for murder. He manages to get 20% of good. He does 20% of what we would call good. So, he has to look to God for 80% in order to get him into heaven if he's going to make it. But then, here are all the good church people, and they come up to 80%. So, they only have to look to God for 20% to make it into heaven.

**Purgatory**

This is the normal way that people think. I'm going to go just as far as I can, and then, God, you get me the rest of the way. Now, because every rational, sensible human being recognizes that he is not perfect (that he never hits it up here to 100%), it was necessary to invent another heretical doctrine, and that is the doctrine of purgatory. This is why the Roman Catholic Church had to invent purgatory: because nobody can make it to 100%. Therefore, the Roman Catholic Church says, "By your good works, go as far as you can. If you make 80%, that's great. Out here, when you die, you will be able to work the other 20% through purgatory. And after you finished your period of suffering in purgatory, you'll get the other 20 points you need, and then you will go to heaven." If you didn't have purgatory, nobody would ever get to heaven.

That's why, when a Roman Catholic dies, who knows his doctrine of his church, he never expects to go to heaven. No Roman Catholic ever expects to go to heaven. His hope is centered in purgatory, and his hope is to get out of there as fast as he can, because it's a place of suffering. Righteousness of God and of man are both viewed as the same thing.

**Human and Divine Righteousness are not the Same Thing**

But I'm afraid that we will have to disillusion those who hold that view, because the Bible makes it very clear that *human and divine righteousness are not the same thing*. Romans 10:1-3 say this: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Romans 10:3 makes it very clear that there is a God righteousness, and that there is a human righteousness, and that they who have gone about establishing human righteousness have missed out on God's righteousness, and thus they are lost. Anytime you pursue your human good as the road to heaven, you are doomed to hell. There is no way around that.

**Divine Righteousness**

Divine righteousness is a facet of God's nature. For that reason, God's righteousness is absolute perfection. God cannot do even the slightest evil. He never has. He never will. He cannot think the slightest thought that is evil. He cannot ignore sin either. He has to exercise full judgment. No leniency is possible (James 1:17).

However, when man deals with righteousness, man will often ignore sin. He will exercise what he calls "leniency." He will ignore the fact that a wrong has been done, but he will ignore the fact that it should be paid for. God cannot do that. God's righteousness is part of His essence.

**The Old Sin Nature**

Here is divine righteousness, and it is part of God's essence. Human righteousness is something else. What is that a part of? Well, one good way to illustrate it is with the diamond-shaped diagram which represents the old sin nature. Everybody has some weak points. We have some weak features about us. Out of our weakness flow sins. But all of us have our strong points too. Therefore, there is in our old sin nature certain strengths. And out of those strengths flow human good, or what we are referring to here as human righteousness. That's where it comes from. All human righteousness comes from the sin nature.

All divine righteousness comes from the essence of God, the perfections of God, the absolute immutable, unchanging righteousness of God. Human righteousness, because it originates with evil in people, is called by God "filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6 tells us that all of our righteousness (all of our human good) are in God's sight as filthy rags. Now, in the sight of human beings, we value these very highly. And it is these human good righteousness that are brought up here on this thermometer scale of righteousness that we are going to use (people think) in order to make it into heaven. But God says, "All of your righteousness is in My sight, a filthy rag. It is something that I cannot accept. It is something so unclean that I cannot accept it in My heaven. I totally reject it." Why? Because it comes from the old sin nature, and thus cannot be accepted at all.

No human being, therefore, has any righteousness at all in any degree in God's sight. Romans 3:10, for example, reads, "As it is written, there is none righteous; no, not one." Nobody is 100% righteous. No human being claims to be.

Verse 12 makes it worse. Romans 3:12 says, "They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is no good; no, not one." You might say, "That doesn't make sense. There's nobody who does good? No, not one? What about all the good that people do?" It is human good. God says, "Because your human good comes from the old sin nature, I don't even call it good. I call it filthy rags. I call it something that I reject, and something that I'll have no part with:" "There is none that do good; no, not one."

When you see what the Bible says about human righteousness, you can readily see that it is totally different from divine righteousness. The two are not the same thing. What people call righteousness is really human beings matching themselves up to their own standards, and matching themselves up to one another. 2 Corinthians 10:12 says that this is not a wise thing to do. Any human good we have is good by human standards. But because it can only come from sin nature within us, then God says that it is contaminated and totally rejected.

So, people are not saved on the basis of their attaining the standard of human righteousness. What I'm saying is: Suppose, as a human being, you could start out here at zero on this scale of righteousness, and as a human being, you could come all the way up here to 100% righteousness (100% of human good). Would it get you into heaven? Not for a moment, because God says, "It comes from the old sin nature. Therefore, I reject it."

So, even if a person could be absolutely perfect from the time of his birth, and never do a single thing wrong, all of that good thing you were doing, because it comes from the old sin nature, would be rejected by God. For this reason, you read in 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 Spirit."

Paul expresses his preference for divine righteousness in Philippians 3:9. Paul says, "And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness (human good from his old sin nature) which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ." That which is of the law is by human works: "That which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Here again you see a distinction made between human and divine righteousness.

So, Romans 3:23 tells us: "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and the glory of God is absolute divine righteousness.

So, a man has relative righteousness. But even if he were 100% righteous on that scale, God would reject it. Unless you have God's absolute righteousness, you cannot enter His heaven. You cannot have eternal life. That's what Romans 1:17 says at the very end of the verse. It says, "The just (those who have absolute divine righteousness) shall live, and they shall do this by faith." So, God is asking us to do something that's impossible. He's asking us to be as perfect as He is. He's asking us to have a righteousness that there is no way that we can secure it.

So, it's not a matter of securing a certain percentage and then letting God make up the rest. The only way a human being can meet this requirement is for God to give us His absolute righteousness. And that's exactly what He did. He has given it to us as a gift.

However, how is God going to give a sinner His absolute righteousness, and thereby God Himself be guilty of sin? Is God going to ignore our wrongdoing? He cannot. He cannot ignore the fact that we are producing sins. He cannot ignore the fact that we are producing good which He rejects. Something has to be done for the sin, because the justice of God demands a payment for sin. And the payment for sin is spiritual death: "The wages of sin is death."

So, God came up with a plan, as the book of Romans is going to explain in detail. It is a very, very magnificent plan whereby God could take sinners into His heaven, and yet remain just, absolutely righteous Himself, while He's doing this. Romans 3:26 tells that to us: "To declare, I say, at this time, His righteousness (God's absolute righteousness), that He might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." God came up with a plan that a person could be declared justified (meaning possessing absolute righteousness), and yet God Himself not be guilty of ignoring sin. The plan, of course, as you know, was the payment of sins by Jesus Christ on the cross. God's own Son died. He died spiritually. He paid for our spiritual death. Now God says that He's ready to give this sacrifice to us (to our credit) as a free gift. That's what Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us. It comes by grace. Romans 3:22 and 2 Corinthians 5:21 tell us that He who knew no sin became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 is a very critical verse: "We become the righteousness of God in Him. That's the only way that we can have His righteousness. This is a divine declaration that a believing sinner possesses the absolute righteousness of God. This is not a fiction. This is actually the case, because Christ has paid for our sins. Now, God is free to do that which His love wants to do for us. Until that sin had been paid for, God could not forgive us our sin. God did not give us His absolute righteousness without Himself being guilty of sin in the process.

**Imputation**

So, 1 John 2:2 says, "And He is the propitiation (Jesus Christ is the satisfaction) for our sins, and not for us only, but also for the sins of the whole world." God has had His justice satisfied. Therefore, there is a way that He can give His absolute righteousness to a sinner. This is what's called imputation. It is imputing His righteousness to us. The English words "righteousness" and "justice" come from the same Greek word. They are the identical Greek word (the same root). And God sees the believer in His Son because, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, at the point of salvation, you are placed in Christ. When you are in Christ, you have the righteousness of Christ attributed to your account, and therefore, you are as perfect as He is.

**Justification**

Romans 3:24 declares that a sinner is justified in God's sight: "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Since this justification has been the product of God's own doing, you cannot lose it. This is the basis of saying that once you are saved, you are always saved, because you're accepting a provision that God has made for you.

So, let's review it. What we are saying is that when you talk about needing God, the average human being is aware of the fact that God is perfect, absolute right. That human being recognizes that he himself is wrong, and is a sinner, and that, therefore, he is going to have a problem of entering God's heaven, where only absolute perfection can reside. So, he concludes that God is absolutely right, and he, as a human being is partly right. And he will see through his good works to become more right all the time, and rise on a scale of values toward 100%. Then, whatever he likes, God will provide for him. He is making divine righteousness and human righteousness the same thing.

However, the Bible tells us that human righteousness comes out of the old sin nature in us, and it is totally different from the divine righteousness which constitutes the essence of God. Because our good comes from the old sin nature, God totally rejects it. So, even if a person achieved 100% on the scale of values of rights and wrongs, he would still not be able to get into heaven.

What God asks of a human being is absolutely impossible: absolute perfection. Therefore, God came up with a brilliant plan. His Son died. He paid the price of sins. Now God offers payment for our debt in the name of Christ, and all we have to do is exhale positive volition faith toward that offer and accept it. If we do, God simply credits the total righteousness of Jesus Christ to our account. That is unlimited assets in the spiritual bank. Therefore, you'll never run out. You can never lose it. This is one bank account that God produced, and that God controls. Therefore, you cannot change that. You had nothing to do with achieving this absolute righteousness. Therefore, you cannot lose it. Once you accept it, you are born into the family of God.

**Forgiveness of Sins**

This is more than forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins is one thing, but that is negative. That is God saying, "I forgive you what you did that was wrong." But there is still on your record the guilt. You still have to your account the fact that you did what was wrong. Justification is positive. It is adding the absolute righteousness of God. Consequently, the guilt is totally removed. One is negative, and one is positive.

Many times you will see a gospel track that explains to people what happens to them when they are born-again. The four spiritual laws does this, for example. You will notice, strangely enough, that they make a great thing about people having their sins forgiven (the negative part). But that's not enough. That would not get you into heaven, because God says that in order to live in His heaven, you have to have His absolute righteousness. Thus, the other thing that you must always tell people is that God is going to justify you. That is, He's going to credit to your account the absolute righteousness of the God-man, Jesus Christ. Therefore, you are in heaven, and you are eternally secure, and you can take a deep sigh of relief. There will be nothing more for you to do. There can be nothing more that can be done to you by sin.

**Grace**

This is the grace basis of salvation, and because it is on this grace basis, it is free to all. It is equal to everybody. It would be very unfair of God to say that salvation comes on the basis of how great an IQ you have; how much money you have; how willing you are to serve the Lord; or, how gifted you are. God's absolute righteousness is simply a gift.

If you insist on pursuing human righteousness, it's a waste of time, and it's dangerous to your internal wellbeing. Understand that. You may pursue your human righteousness to the day of your death, and it'll do you no good in God's presence. Those who insist on doing this are neutralizing God's grace. And I don't want you to miss this, because you have to make this very important point clear to people – that when they operate on this concept of my righteousness, part of the way, and God's righteousness carrying me the rest of the way, you have introduced a factor that, in effect, causes you to be lost.

Notice what Romans 4:4-5 tell us: "Now to give that works (that's human righteousness) the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt." If you work for it, then you deserve what you receive: "But to him that does not work, but believes on Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness (for divine righteousness)."

And Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us: "For by grace you are saved, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." The Bible is very clear that there's only one way that you can be saved, and that way is by grace. Here is the keyword: "No salvation apart from grace." And what this verse is telling us, in Romans 4:4-5, is that if you come along here and say, "Well, salvation for me is works 80%, and then I'll use grace for 20%," God says, "No, that does not equal salvation." And that's where your formula is wrong. Human righteousness plus divine righteousness does not equal salvation. Now, that is a true formula. ... That's what Romans 4:4-5 are telling you.

**If you are not Saved by Grace, you are not Saved at all**

This is a very dangerous game. There are whole churches, building magnificent structures in this city, which tell people every Sunday: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive water baptism, and thou shalt be saved." And I'm wondering how many of those people who have come forward to receive Christ as Savior, and then rushed out to get the water baptism are headed straight for hell, because God says, "You must come to Me completely denuded of all of your human righteousness, and you must stand exposed before Me for what you are, and you must simply look to Me and say, 'I believe it. I believe the gospel. If I am not saved by grace, I am not saved at all." I think that you have a very hard time contradicting that principle in Scripture. If you are not saved by grace, you are not saved at all.

So, don't play the dangerous game of thinking that you're covering your debt by trusting Christ and His absolute righteousness, and then adding your own just to make sure. When you have added your own, then you have neutralized what God is willing to offer you, and only on that basis will He offer it to you.

However, I'm happy to tell you that God's righteousness has been kept intact. And this is the thing that the gospel so magnificently reveals. It has revealed to us that God's righteousness was not compromised.

This verse has a great deal more. We haven't come to the most magnificent part of it, which are those final words, and we're going to look at that next time. But if you are here, and maybe you've been around church a long time, and somehow you picked up the idea from all the people that you know who talk about their good works outweighing their bad words, and somehow you've fallen as a young person (or even as an older person) into the dangerous habit (into the dangerous trap) of equating human righteousness and divine righteousness as being one of the same thing, now is the time to change your mind. Now is the time for you to abandon that notion, and for you to turn with complete helplessness to the Lord Jesus Christ, and simply to believe the gospel. That is the power of God unto salvation. If you receive that Savior on a grace basis, then God can give you this righteousness that you need to go to heaven. If you do not receive it on this grace basis, then you're interjecting works, and it can no longer be by grace, and there is no salvation in the Bible apart from grace. It cannot be half-and-half.

Take care, lest you too should be in the company of the people in Matthew 7:22 who are going to stand before Jesus Christ, fully expecting to enter heaven, only to discover to their horror that the Lord that they glorified; the Lord that they praised; the Lord to whom they attributed the powers of the miracles, the casting out of demons, and the prophecies that they were doing; and, the Lord whom they honored, has to tell them, "Depart from Me. I never knew you." Why did those people not know Him with such devotion? Because they had mixed works, mostly of an emotional nature probably, along with what God had provided. When they did that, they canceled the whole thing out. Beware, lest you should be in their company. God forbid.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

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