***Righteousness
(The Most Important Verses in the Bible)
RO23-01***

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Please open your Bibles to Romans 3:21-22. God judges every person in the world on the basis of the truth that he possesses about God, but which he has rejected: truth from creation; truth from the image of God within him; and, truth from conscience. God judges every person on the basis of truth he possesses.

For this reason, no one will be able to stand before God and to excuse himself in any way. At the great white throne judgment, where God judges the unbeliever, every mouth will be closed. There will be no excuse. No one will be able to plead ignorant and say, "I never knew about that." So, of course, that answers your question, as we've already indicated: "What about the person who never hears about Jesus Christ somewhere in some primitive society?" That never exists. Everybody knows about God. Everybody has truth to some degree about God: from conscience; from creation; and, from the image of God within us.

A person may not have the content of the gospel, but he does have God consciousness. He has that kind of knowledge in his soul. In Romans 3:21, where we now begin, a new section of the book of Romans begins. It goes all the way through Romans 8:39. In this new section, Paul is now going to show how God Himself has graciously provided the absolute righteousness that everyone needs to go to heaven.

The previous section, Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20 has shown us that everyone needs absolute righteousness, but no one is able to provide it. Nobody can produce it. No human system of salvation can satisfy the justice of God, nor equate His absolute righteousness. The Bible says, "Be holy as I am holy." Unless you are as holy as God, you cannot go to heaven. You will come short of it.

The problem is that a God like this, in order to maintain His absolute righteousness and His absolute justice, cannot pretend that something is so, which is not so. We are sinners. We cannot produce absolute righteousness. We cannot meet the justice of God which says death for sin, and payment for sin. Consequently, here is a problem. How in the world is a holy God going to take unholy people to heaven and still preserve His Holiness? He cannot do that by a fiction. He cannot say, "Well, let's just say I'm going to forget it, and come on to heaven." If we are going to go to heaven, and if we must be as holy as God is to be in heaven, it cannot be on the basis of a fiction. It has to be real. We have to actually be that holy. That is actually how absolutely perfect we have to be.

**Absolute Righteousness by Grace**

The divine solution is the grace gift of absolute righteousness. This grace gift of absolute righteousness is unrelated to the recipient. That's a very important principle. It is unrelated to you as a recipient. It makes no difference how sinful you are; it makes no difference who you are; it makes no difference the kind of life you live; and, it makes no difference what kind of person you are – your characteristics or your qualities don't make any difference. God says, "I have a grace gift of absolute righteousness which is provided completely apart from anything you are or anything that you do. This is the divine solution. It's set up as a grace gift.

Paul is now going to show that Christianity has the answer to the human sin problem; that is, that the problem of human sin can be met by Christianity, and by Christianity alone. And it can only be met by this grace system that God has set up. There is no other way.

**Modern Man**

When we talk to modern man relative to where he's going to spend eternity, we are sometimes tempted to tell him that Jesus Christ died for his sin, but modern man does not think that sin is a problem. Therefore, very often, when you tell a person that Jesus Christ died for his sins, he's just not impressed at all, because he doesn't think he has a problem with sin. He doesn't think he has the need for anybody to die for him. So, we have to begin in witnessing to modern man in a different way. We have to try to show people that they themselves, within themselves, know that they are not what they ought to be, and that what they have is not just an imaginary guilt. They think it is, it is not just social disorientation – malfunctions of relationships between people. They think that that's what the problem is. It's not just economic deprivation. It is not that I am in this condition because I am deprived economically: "I steal because I'm poor."

**The Solution for Moral Guilt**

So, Christianity prescribes a solution that the unbeliever, to begin with, doesn't think he needs, because Christianity provides a solution for real moral guilt, and he doesn't think he has it. So, the modern unbeliever first has to be pressed to see that he's a failure by his own standards, and that he has genuine moral guilt; that that is his failure before God; and, that this guilt has contaminated all the facets of his soul, so, therefore, he cannot approach God at all. Everything that comes from within him (from within his soul) is already judged by God as being rejected.

**Distinctions of Christianity**

Christianity has three basic distinctions from all other systems, and maybe this will help bring things into focus a little more for us.

1. **A Personal, Infinite God**

First of all, Christianity declares that mankind and the world are the perfect creation of a personal, infinite God. It is not that man and creation are the result of an impersonal force, but of a personal God. Neither are mankind and the world the product of a limited deity, like the gods of mythology. The gods of mythology were limited deities. They were made in the pattern of men. So, they had limitations upon them. They had failures. They had weaknesses. They had evils within them because they were just reflections of mankind.

Christianity says, "Wait a minute, first of all, you must understand that you are the product of a personal and an infinite God. You must have those two words: personal; and, infinite. The God of Christianity is one in essence, but He is three in persons. The fact of the Trinity connotes personality. Because God is three persons, the Bible is making it clear to us that God is a personal being. He is not an impersonal force. Since man has been made in this image of God, man is also a personality. Though man is finite, yet he is a person, and as such he can communicate person-to-person with God.

People cannot communicate with non-personal plants, for example. On television, you see people talking to their plants to make them grow, but that is dumb. You cannot communicate with plants, and nothing you may say to your plant is going to get that plant to do anything. Therefore, if you and I were simply the product of an impersonal force, we could not communicate with that impersonal force. We can communicate with a God who is out there because he is a person, and we are persons. Christianity reveals that man was made to find his completion in this perfect God.

**Uneasiness**

So, down in the soul of man, there is this searching. There is this yearning. There is this uneasiness, because he's reaching out for something, but he doesn't know what. What he means is the fulfillment; the satisfaction; and, the completion which only communication with God can give him.

Once the unbeliever comes to understand this, then he's ready to listen to the claims of Jesus Christ. Until he recognizes that in his soul there is a yearning, and that that yearning is for a contact with this personal, infinite God, he will not seek that personal relationship.

Human viewpoint says that the universe and mankind are the product of an impersonal cosmic machine. So, we have the concept of evolution. Evolution begins with the premise that everything is the result of an impersonal cosmic machine. Christianity says, "No, it's a product of a personal, infinite God, and when He finished, it was perfect.

1. **Real, Personal, Moral Guilt**

Point number two of the distinctives of Christianity is that Christianity says that man's problem is a real personal moral guilt. The problem is not that chance has made man wrong nor that man has not fully evolved. If man is the product of an impersonal cosmic machine, then we may say, "Well, he's going to evolve, and he's going to get better; or, that the machine missed, and made man a little wrong, and we have to try to straighten that out. Christianity says, "That isn't the problem. The problem is that you have a personal, real, moral good. You are out of step with God. You have violated what God expects – the standards of God. A perfect, infinite God made a perfect humanity and a perfect universe. Adam was perfect. The current imperfections in human nature were injected through sin. They were injected into God's perfect creation.

**Communism**

This is a basic premise which is denied by communism. Communism says, "Yes, people are not what they should be. People don't act the way they should. People are selfish, but the reason people are selfish is because they are reared under the economic system of capitalism. Capitalism teaches people to go out and provide things for themselves; to see things for themselves; to put their efforts forth; and, to gain profit so that they can take that profit and use it upon themselves as they wish." Communism says, "That's why people are selfish. It's because they grow up in the economic system of capitalism.

Karl Marx came up with the non-scriptural idea that you should rear people under a different economic system from childhood up (if a person were reared under a socialist system or under a communist system) where the principle would be: "Work in order to take what you earn to give to other people so other people can enjoy it, and so other people can benefit." He said that if we would rear a child, from the moment that he's an infant, with the idea of working to give it away to somebody else, then there would be no selfishness, and then there would be no problems with humanity. People would then have a perfect nature. Communism says, "We can transform men into being perfect persons, providing we can rear them under a socialist communist system, and providing that we can keep them from being contaminated by the self-centered, self-interest, self-promoting, self-using quality that capitalism teaches people.

Well, you'd say, "Well, they've been at it for a half-century. Have they got any perfect Russians yet?" No, they haven't. Why is that? Well, the Russians say, "That's because we have not been able to completely insulate people from the disease of capitalism. It still exists in the world." The Chinese communists are very clear about this. The Chinese communists teach their people constantly that: "As long as there is one resident of capitalistic thinking left in the world, it will contaminate us on the other side of the world. So, therefore, we must conquer the whole world. The whole world must be brought under communism before we can enjoy the protection of human nature."

So, when we abandoned our allies in Vietnam and Cambodia, the communists came in, and they had a terrific bloodbath. I mean, they slaughtered people left and right. It was absolutely fantastic. The stories and the reports are now increasingly coming out about a few who escaped, as they're reporting what was done. Literally millions of people, again, were slaughtered in those countries. And you'd say, "Why do they do that?" Well, they do that because they operate on this principle that a human being who has been diseased by capitalism cannot be changed. Therefore, he must be slaughtered because his presence contaminates the rest. So, they have systematically gone through to slaughter everybody who has been contaminated, and who they do not think they can reeducate. "Reeducate" means to put them in a concentration camp, and put them through a nightmare so that the person decides to act differently.

**Guilty Rebels**

In contrast, the principle of Christianity is that man has a real moral problem, and it makes no difference what kind of economic system you rear him under. His sin nature is still going to be there, and it's going to be evil. After there is not a breath of capitalism left in this world, and after it has all become communist, the old sin nature will still be there, and the communist world will not enjoy that selfless, perfect humanity that they envision. It is a delusion. Mankind is morally guilty before God because he is in rebellion against God. No matter what economic system you live under, the old sin nature is still a rebel against God. It's a rebel against the truth of God. It's not just guilt feelings. It is that you are actually a rebel against God's truth.

So, the Bible says that everyone is personally responsible for his own lost condition because everyone, as a rebel, who's brought real moral guilt upon himself.

1. **The Guilt Must be Removed**

So, the third distinction now of Christianity is that Christianity teaches that the tension of real guilt can only be resolved by really removing the guilt. Christianity says, "You must actually remove this guilt." You can't just pretend. You can't come up with a fiction, and say that it's gone. You must actually remove the guilt.

No, how do you do that? Well, no human ever can do this. Everything that a person does flows from his old sin nature. It's either sins or human good, and God rejects both. So, this is ultimately a legal problem. It is ultimately the problem of God who, as a judge, must declare the sinner justified. But God cannot say that a person has had his guilt removed until the penalty has been paid. God cannot create a fiction. So, if a person is going to be declared holy, then he must also actually be holy.

So, God had a really fantastic problem on His hands – how to take sinners and actually and truly, without a fiction, being able to declare as a judge: "You are holy."

Now when a person is declared justified by God, he is thereby saved from the lake of fire. The question is: how can God declare him just? Well, this has been done through the payment of Jesus Christ on the cross, who took the penalty of our moral guilt, and actually paid for it on that cross. So, mankind has been provided a ground on which God the judge can say, "You are justified. You are now holy in My sight. You are now qualified to live in heaven.”

So, remember these three principles: The world, and we as human beings, were created by an infinite, personal God, and what He produced was absolutely perfect. Man has an actual, real, personal, moral guilt within him. He ruined that perfect creation that God produced. Christianity says that this problem within man (this conflict between himself and God) can only be resolved by actually removing this moral guilt, so that he can be declared just. All other religious systems ignore these three basic factors, and come up with a system that does not meet the human need.

**Three Types of People to Witness to**

1. **The Ethiopian Eunuch**

So, when we are witnessing the people, we pointed out that some people we witness to (some unbelievers) are going to be like the Ethiopian eunuch. They will be prepared beforehand with a metal content from Scripture. He knew something from the Bible. These people can be very quickly reached by giving them the historical facts about the death of Christ in their behalf for their sins. We can explain to them that salvation is a matter of believing this good news. And they will readily respond, having been prepared by the Spirit of God on the basis of the Scripture they have. They understand what you're saying. We have very few people in the United States who have this kind of biblical content in their minds today.

1. **The Prodigal Son**

The second kind of person is like the prodigal son who has no biblical mental content. You can take this kind of person, and you can rush him into an emotional decision via some kind of an invitation. He can have a psychological reaction without actually being regenerated. When you witness to people who have no biblical content, you are responsible before God to see to it that you do not let them make an emotional move. Do you understand that? You are responsible before God to see that people do not make an emotional move relative to salvation. You do not railroad them on the part of some emotional pitch that you have given them, so that they are reacting from emotion, rather than from the content of the Scripture.

This is what's dangerous about using terminology which is not scriptural. The Bible has only one way to be saved, and that is by believing what God has said that He has sent His Son to do on the cross to handle your moral guilt. The Bible never says, "To invite Christ into your heart,” or "into your life," or any of the other new, fancy, updated, upbeat expressions that actually are not only not scriptural, but are deceptive, and which cause a person to have an emotional reaction. And that's what's bad about those expressions. They bestir an emotional reaction, so the person has an emotional response.

When I was at the seminar in Atlanta this past week, one of the things that the preachers there were bemoaning was the fact that 50% of their members are unsaved, and that 50% of the members, consequently, never are around, and never are participating. The reason for that is because someplace along the line, there is a problem. And I was unkind enough to speak up. I usually don't speak up in those groups. But I couldn't resist speaking up and saying: "That seems to suggest that the preachers are doing something wrong when they are bringing people into the local church, perhaps?" It didn't go over too popularly, I noticed. I heard a lot of "Amens" on a lot of things, but I didn't hear any about that. It wasn't one of the most popular remarks of the conference. But that happens to be exactly the truth. Someplace along the line, some preacher is giving a person, who has no biblical concept, an emotional pitch, and he's causing that person to respond on an emotional basis rather than on the content in his mind of understanding the gospel.

If you need a person to make a move on an emotional pitch that gives him a psychological conversion but not an actual conversion, it's going to be against you, and God's going to hold you responsible in eternity for that. You do not invite people to do things that enable them to substitute for the real thing of believing in Christ as Savior. I don't care whether it's raising a hand; walking down an aisle; signing a pledge card of some kind; or, anything else. You do not give people a chance to do something that will substitute for receiving the content of the gospel, and believing what God has said he will do for them through His Son.

These people, like the prodigal son, have a mental block against biblical Christianity. They are brainwashed against seeing themselves as lost rebels against a personal and holy God. Consequently, their naturalistic optimism frequently will take them into the pigpen like it did the prodigal son, before they are ready to face up to the need of a Savior. God has to make it clear to them in the pigpen that what they need to be saved from is their sin, not just from the fact that their life has no point to it.

A lot of people think that Christianity is to give you a chance to escape meaninglessness. However, Christianity is giving you a chance to escape the consequences of your sin – your real moral guilt.

1. **The Rich Young Ruler**

However, then there is the third kind of unbeliever that you are witness to, and that is the rich young ruler type. He has his own religious systems where he substitutes human good words for the good work of Jesus Christ on the cross. To this person, you have to press upon him the failure to be consistent with his own claim of good works. He cannot be consistent with what he knows he ought to be. His non-Christian presuppositions just do not fit into what man actually is, and what he himself actually is. You have to expose him to the logical inconsistencies in his thinking. That's what Jesus did with the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler said, "I can do all good. I've done it all – everything in the commandments."

Then Jesus said, "Well, here is a very significant good. Get rid of all of your money and give it to the poor. God would be pleased to have you do that." And the rich young ruler could not do it. He went away sorrowing. And he was logically forced to the admission that what he was claiming about himself was not true. At that point, he could have received Jesus Christ or rejected Him, which is what he chose to do.

**Romans on Salvation**

So, now the section on condemnation, form Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20, is completed. Now begins the section on Salvation, from Romans 3:21 through Romans 8:39. This new section is going to answer the question: how does God save a sinner? So, we begin in verse 21 with the words, "But now." The word "but" is the Greek word "de," and it indicates a transition to a new subject. It is attached to the word "nuni," which is the word "now." This is an adverb. This refers to information in present time after the cross, in contrast to pre-cross information. "De nuni" is an important phrase in the Greek Bible, because it is a phrase which centers our attention on a contrast. It is like coming to the summit of a mountain where you stand on the ridge. And on the one side, you go off in one direction; and, the other side goes off in another direction. And the ridge itself is marked by this phrase "de nuni." It is the dividing line. You have been coming up one side; you come over the top; and, now you're coming into a totally new situation.

Here it centers our attention on God's present solution to His divine wrath against all mankind. On the one side of the slope, we have seen divine wrath against all mankind. On the other side of the slope now is the solution that removes the divine wrath against all mankind. Paul is saying, "But now." These are very dramatic words: "Whatever the past is that I've described for you, and whatever the situation was, now there's a change. Now things are different."

**The Continental Divide**

You may have traveled in some of our Western states through the Rocky Mountain range. And suddenly, as you drove down the highway, you saw a sign. The sign said, "Continental Divide." That point on that highway marked the top of the Rocky Mountain ridge line at which the nation is divided east and west. So, rain that falls on one side of that sign will flow out to the Pacific Ocean; and, rain that falls on the other side will flow to the Atlantic Ocean. It is the continental divide. It is the "de nuni" of our continent.

When I was in Guatemala, I sat in a little town by the side of a fountain. This fountain was built on the continental divide. It is very ornate, and it was spewing out water from various directions, and into various mouths of animals, and so on. It was very intricately set up. This was a fountain that set on the continental divide. So, actually the water from one side of the fountain flowed off to the Pacific Ocean. The water from the other side flowed off ultimately to the Atlantic Ocean. That's what "de nuni" is. It is the dividing point between the horror of the past of being under God's wrath, and now the solution of being able to get out from under that wrath, and actually be qualified to spend eternity with God in heaven.

Paul has been painting, as you have seen, a very, very black picture. Storm clouds of human sin have been in this picture, and across it have been flashing the lightning bursts of the wrath of God. Suddenly, in this picture comes "de nuni," which is a break in the clouds, and the sunshine of grace beginning to pour through. That's the picture you've had here. We've had the storm clouds of human sin; the lightning of God's wrath; and, now the sunshine of grace beginning to break through.

**The Most Important Verses in all the Bible**

These words introduce the two most important verses in all the Bible: Romans 3:21-22. These words are going to answer the problem of Romans 1:18, which declares that we are all under the wrath of God. In Romans 3:21-22, we are going to see how God can take a foul sinner, and bring that foul sinner into a sinless heaven without contaminating heaven, or without God losing His own righteousness; His own justice; and, his own holiness. These verses tell you that. Now get that straight. These verses are going to tell you how God takes a foul sinner, and takes him into a seamless heaven, without fouling up that heaven, and without God Himself losing His Holiness in the process. God has provided a way of actually removing our moral guilt (which is not a fiction), which is not an arbitrary ignoring of sin. It is something that actually does take place. This expression "but now" indicates that change.

For Paul, everything is then (before the cross); and, now (after the cross). That's how the apostle Paul thinks. I'll give you a few verses. You may want to look into this on your own, but you'll see how often he uses this very combination of words. It's the same thing in the Greek that we have here: "but now" in English is the meaning in the Greek. It's a signal phrase of: then, in sin; now, out of sin (Ephesians 2:12-13, Colossians 1:26-27, 2 Timothy 1:9-10, Romans 16:25-26). In all these verses, Paul contrasts between the uselessness of legal righteousness that Romans 3:20 spoke of: "that which was then;" and, the availability of faith righteousness which God accepts, which is now what Romans 3:21-22 explain to us.

"But now the righteousness of God." The word "righteousness" is the Greek word "dikaiosune." This refers to the quality of being right by God's standards. The Mosaic Law was such an expression of God's righteousness. "Dikaiosune" means being right the way God looks at what is right. The whole Mosaic system expressed that kind of righteousness.

**Righteousness**

Now, it does not say in the Greek Bible: *the* righteousness, like our English Bible does. It simply says, "Righteousness." When the Greek does that, it's stressing the quality. It is not stressing a specific righteousness. It is speaking about the quality of being right in the sight of God as such. In all that God demands and approves, without exception, you have that quality of righteousness. It is not referring to the character of God. You and I may say, "What is the essence of God?" We say that God is sovereignty; righteousness; justice; eternal life; love; omniscience; omnipotence; omnipresence; immutability; and, veracity. Well, right there is righteousness, and it is plus "R:" it is absolute righteousness. That is not what this passage is speaking about. It does not say *the* righteousness. That would mean something that is the character of God. But it is indeed the quality of the righteousness of God ("theos"). This means that this righteousness originates with God. It is not God's own righteousness in His character, but it is a righteousness which comes from Him to us. It's not the attribute. It is not God's rectitude.

In Romans 3:5, that *was* the attribute: God's personal rectitude. Romans 3:5 says, "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God." That's the attribute of God. A little later, we're going to have his attribute here in Romans 3:25 coming up: "Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins. Now, there is God's personal righteousness. That is His attribute. This, however, is simply the quality of being able to stand before God as a person free of moral guilt. It is *a* righteousness – the quality of no moral guilt.

So, this is a righteousness from God to the believing sinner. God has demanded of us as sinners a righteousness equal to His own. No other righteousness can surround God in heaven except that which equals His own. And God's absolute righteousness is hereby credited to the sinner's account so that he's compatible with God's attribute of perfect righteousness. That's what God says. God says, "I am holy. I have perfect righteousness. You must have that kind of quality to be compatible with Me in heaven." And this is the thing that Paul is speaking of.

It's the same thing we have in Corinthians 5:21, where it says: "Christ became sin for us that we might become the quality of righteousness in Him."

So, we will translate this as: "Righteousness that comes from God. But now." On the other side of this picture: "Righteousness that comes from God." The idea is the righteousness of which God is the author, which comes from Him, which He gives, and which, consequently, is acceptable in His site. It refers to a righteousness that God provides as opposed to one that you and I can provide. Ours is relative righteousness.

**Righteousness in the Gospel**

So, God, while in His character is absolute righteousness, He also provides absolute righteousness as a quality for us. God *is* righteous. God *demands* righteousness. God *provides* righteousness. Now, that's the gospel. If you were to talk to a person, they might say, "Well, what's my problem?" You could say, "One: God is righteousness; two: God demands righteousness of you; three: God provides righteousness." Now, that's the gospel. That's the sunshine breaking through. God is absolute righteousness? Yes. He demands absolute righteousness? Yes. And He'll give it to me? Yes. Now, that's the gospel.

However, there are some people who reject those three points. Some people say, "No, God is not absolute righteousness." These are the people who think that because God is love, He will not send anybody to hell. They actually are denying that God is righteousness. They think that there will be no eternal dealing with sin.

So, the Christian Science group says, "God is love. You just cannot tell me that He's going to send a person to suffer the actual pains of burning in the lake of fire in hell forever. No, that cannot be.

The Jehovah's Witnesses say, "No, God is love. He's not going to do that. He is going to wipe you out of existence." What are these people saying? They're denying what the Scriptures say – that God is absolute righteousness.

Some people reject the fact that God demands righteousness. They think that man can secure salvation by his own works; by his human good; or, by his religious rituals. They actually think that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is unnecessary. So, you have this group that believes that, by their good works, they can secure a standing with God, and that God is not going to demand absolute righteousness of them. We have a vast group of humanity that falls in that category.

Then you have people who reject the idea that God provides righteousness. This is rejected by those who think that Jesus Christ was merely a man – not God. So, His death does not provide anything. They believe that if God does provide anything, they must add their own good words to it. So, you have this group that does not believe that God provides absolute righteousness.

So, when you're talking to unbelievers (and this is what Paul is doing here), you have to get across to them that God is absolute righteousness; God demands absolute righteousness; and, God gives absolute righteousness. That is the glory of the gospel.

The marvelous thing about all this, he says, is that this is given apart from the law. The world "apart" is the Greek word "choris." "Choris" means "absolutely apart" or "absolutely separated." It's a very strong word. You'll find it used in Hebrews 4:15 in the same way – absolutely separated: from what? From the "nomos." And the "nomos" is here, not the Law of Moses specifically, because the Greek again does not say *the* law. It just says, "From law" (the quality). Anytime the Greek does not have this word "the" before a word, it means the quality. So, here you have a quality of human effort.

The Mosaic Law did express divine righteousness, but the Jews knew the impossibility of keeping the Mosaic Law. They tried, and they couldn't. So, all of a sudden, Paul comes along and he says, "Now there is available to a human being absolute righteousness, apart from the principle (the system) of human rights." "Nomos" stands for that" human rights. It is man's efforts. It is what we call "good works." Paul says that there is a system of absolute righteousness that does not come as a result of who you are; what you are; what you do; or, any human being at all.

Now, for the Jews, believe me, that was a welcome relief, to hear something like that. They had suffered for centuries trying to keep 613 rules. That's all there were: just 613. And in no way could they do it.

I want to show you something. This phrase "without the law" in the Greek comes before our previous phrase, "the righteousness of God." If you were reading this in the Greek Bible, you would read: "But now, absolutely apart from the law, the righteousness of God is manifested." The reason it is put up front in the sentence is to emphasize this fact that it is a system of righteousness where you don't do a thing to get it. You don't do a thing to earn it. You, as a sinner, absolutely are not asked to be involved in providing this righteousness in any way. All you're asked to do is to take it.

So, the phrase "apart from the law" modifies the phrase "righteousness." It tells us what kind of a righteousness God now gives you. It is a righteousness that you don't get through something you do. It is an apart-from-the-law righteousness. So, in the Greek, the "apart" comes first, then the word "righteousness:" "Apart from the law, righteousness" is the way it is in the Greek.

This is equal to the idea that we have in Galatians 2:16. Let me just read that. It puts it this way: "Knowing that a man is not justified by the worship of the Law (that is, by human efforts of any kind – not the Mosaic Law specifically), but by the faith of Jesus Christ. Even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law (or by a works system). For by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." While he has a reference to the Mosaic Law, the principle, again, is a works system. He uses the word "law" in its broader general term of you doing something to get something from God.

Now, this kind of righteousness is apart from human doing or human deserving. The kind of sinner you are makes no difference.

Then he has the last word: "manifested" ("phaneroo"). This word means "to make evident;" "to make clear;" or, "to uncover." So, today the absolute righteousness from God is secured apart from human works. This is clearly declared to us by God through Jesus Christ, and in the record of the New Testament Scriptures. This word is perfect tense. That means that it has been revealed in the Old Testament, and it stands revealed to us in the New Testament. It is passive voice. The absolute righteousness of God is made known to us by the Holy Spirit. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact.

So, here's the first part of the most magnificent verses in all the Bible: "But now." This connotes the great continental divide of all of human history. Death and the wrath of God are on one side. The sunshine of salvation is on the other side: "But now, apart from the law (from human effort works systems), there is an absolute righteousness quality from God which is manifest. It's made known."

Now, thank God that somehow in His grace, He looked upon you and said, "I'm going to let you understand this. I'm going to take you, and I'm going to manifest this grace to you. I'm going to make it clear to you that God is absolute righteousness; that God demands absolute righteousness to be in heaven; and, that He will give you absolute righteousness. I'm going to make that clear to you. But for millions of other people who surround you, that will not be made clear. They will not understand that. They will not receive it." For millions of other people, they will not understand that there is in this age (now) available a completed (apart from human effort) righteousness (apart from human doing righteousness).

So, we have people who say, "I must be baptized with water so that I can be saved." That is human works. There are people who say, "I must take the Lord's Supper so that I can have my sins forgiven." That is human works righteousness. There are people who say, "I must belong to an organization, or a certain denomination." There are denominations today that say, "If you do not belong to their denomination, you're not going to be saved." And if what those people say is true, everybody sitting in this room is in a lot of trouble. I mean, they look to you eyeball-to-eyeball, and they are just as serious as any human being can be. And they are just as sincere, and they are just as concerned to plead with you: "Please become a member of our church. The Bible says that if you are not a member of our church, you will go to hell."

However, Paul says, "Now it's different. And to you, I have made it clear – to you sitting here who are in Christ. I have chosen; I have elected; and, I have called you. To you, I have made this clear – that the great divide has provided a righteousness for you where you don't do anything. You just take it. You just accept it.

If you're here, and somehow perhaps, someplace in your background, you've attached some doing to your salvation, this is the time to get rid of it. This is the time to clean it up, because I know there are thousands of church members who are going to hell who think they're going to heaven, who, because of the way they were invited to receive Christ as Savior, were confused. So, they hung on to the fact that they walked an aisle. That's what they're trusting in. They hung on to the fact that they became church members. That's what they're hanging on to. They received water baptism, and that's the thing they're counting on. They have some relationship to a denomination (a church). That's what they're hanging on to, because the way it was presented to them, they were kicked into an emotional high, so they had a psychological conversion, but they did not have a receiving of Christ as personal Savior. And if you're in that condition, back out of it.

The opening part of this verse should make it clear to you that unless you have God's absolute righteousness, apart from human doings, you don't have anything. Somebody may have confused you, and somebody may have set your feet on the road to hell. And you may still be going in that direction.

God is righteous (absolute righteousness). God demands absolute righteousness, but God only gives absolute righteousness to those who receive it by believing in His Son, Jesus Christ, and His work on the cross. God has said that His Son paid your price (the price of your sin). Now God says, "I have the ground. I can give you absolute righteousness." And that's the only way you can get it.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

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