***Witnessed by the Law and the Prophets
RO23-02***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1975)**

Please turn to Romans 3:21-22. Once more, we want to remind you that only Christianity has the answers that will resolve the alienation that exists between God and man by nature. The Holy Spirit uses Christians in one way or another to confront the unbeliever with the fact of their separation from God.

John 16:8-11 give to us the explanation of how a person who is spiritually dead can yet understand the Bible relative to the gospel. If you are spiritually dead, you can't understand anything about the Bible. You can get some of the facts memorized, but the spiritual phenomena of the Scripture of doctrine you will never understand. You simply cannot enter into it. You don't have a receiver.

So, if you're spiritually dead (you're not a child of God), the Bible is a meaningless, dull, boring and useless book. Yet, the gospel is a part of doctrine. The gospel is the first thing a person has to understand in order to be able to enter into eternal life. Well, the way that is handled is that this is the one thing that God the Holy Spirit will explain to the unbeliever. He will explain to the unbeliever what he needs to know concerning his alienation from God, and the fact that he needs an absolute righteousness from God.

So, when you and I witness the people, we should remember that. One of the things that we legitimately should pray for, as we ask God to use our witness, is that the Spirit of God would made clear to this person this particular truth concerning the gospel. He will do that. He will not make other things clear, but that, and that alone, He will.

**Why Does a Person go to Hell?**

So, Jesus, in order to make this clear as to what role the Spirit of God would play in relationship to the witnessing of these disciples that He was soon to leave, says, "And when He is come (that is, God the Holy Spirit), He will convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment." Then he explains what that means: "He will convict the world of sin because they believe not on Me." Why does a person go to the lake of fire? Because he is a drunkard? No. Because he's a thief? No. Because he's a murderer? No. Because he's an adulterer? No. Because he's a liar. No. A person goes to the lake of fire for one reason: because of unbelief (because he has not trusted in Jesus Christ as Savior). It is critical that we understand that the death of Jesus Christ has paid for all those sins. That's what unlimited atonement means. It means that everything has been taken care of, and that Jesus Christ is now the propitiation for the whole world. He is the satisfaction for the sins of all the world.

1 John 2:2: Jesus Christ not only satisfy the holiness of God for those of us who have believed, but he has satisfied it for those who haven't believed. For all the people who are in Haiti tonight, they are there while Jesus Christ has been the propitiation, the satisfaction for their sins. So, what is it that sends a person to hell? It's not what he does. It is what he has refused to do relative to accepting God's payment for his sins. That's all. God the judge says, "I want to declare you not guilty. I want to declare you justified, but you have to let Me do that. You must accept this verdict. I'm ready to pronounce it, but you have to accept it. Until you're ready to accept it, I cannot pronounce it.

So, the issue today, Jesus says, is not your individual sins. It is not all the terrible wrong things a person does, but it is simply unbelief. That's what will send you to hell, because the price for your sins has already been paid.

Secondly, he says, "Of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and you see me no more." One of the things that Jesus Christ made evident, as He moved on this earth for three-and-a-half years of His ministry was that this was a sinless man. He could confront a mob of His enemies and say, "Which of you convicts Me of sin? Speak up. Who's first?" And they hated Him. They ground their teeth, and not one of them could say a word, because He was an absolutely sinless man. For the first time since Adam, He was a man who operated in absolute conformity to the will of God in every word; in every deed; in every thought; and, in every emotion, and all the way down the line. No man like that had been seen on the face of the earth since Adam. Here, lo and behold, comes Jesus Christ, virgin born with no human father. Thus, the sin nature could not be passed on because it's passed on through the Father. He has a sinless nature again. He's back where Adam was, and He demonstrates that a man can obey and be positive to God.

So, all his life, in all of his ministry: with all kinds of aggravation; all kinds of taunting; and, all kinds of attacks upon him, never once did He sin. Jesus said, "I'm going back to heaven. Absolute righteousness in operation will no longer be evident to you people. The Holy Spirit is going to have to make that clear now. The Holy Spirit is going to have to make you aware of the fact that whatever you think you are, you're not what you ought to be. By your own standards, you are a failure, let alone by God's standards."

Then he says, "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged, and the prince of this world (the person who runs this world) is Satan." The point here is that Satan has been judged on the cross. Where once he was a power to keep people in the slave market of sin, that power has been broken. Now a person can walk out of that slave market simply by accepting Christ as Savior. Satan can no longer enslave you.

Now, that's a tremendous message. And that is what He (the Holy Spirit) will make clear to the unbelievers to whom you and I testify. Our business is to be used by the Lord to be the channels to bring unbelievers this particular information.

So, unbelievers today may dismiss personal sin guilt and say, "Well, it's just a mental problem. It is not a real thing. It is something I imagine. It is wrong thinking. But God says, "It is a problem of the soul and it is real. And it will take you into the lake of fire.

**Christianity Declares that there is a Personal, Infinite God**

Christianity, for this reason, is radically different than any other religion or any other philosophy that mankind has ever come up with, because there are three distinctives of Christianity. Christianity says three things that no other religious system and no other philosophical system says. One: Christianity declares that humanity and the universe were made perfectly by a personal, infinite God. And notice that He is personal, and He is infinite. The religions of the East, in their religious ideas and the religious concepts that they came up with, swung toward the idea that God was non-personal. They swung away from the fact that God was a personal being. So, God was just a force. God was some kind of a cosmic force. So, with the religions of the East, deity was an impersonal force.

In the religions of the west of the ancient world, they swung in the other direction, and they countered the infinite quality of God, because their gods were the gods of mythology, which were patterned after men with all the weaknesses and shortcomings of human beings. So, the religions of the West taught that God was finite. Human religions fall into one of these two categories: either the Eastern view that God is an impersonal force; or, the Western view that God is finite, even though he may be a personal force. The Greeks and Romans thought about their gods as being persons, but limited finite beings like themselves.

Christianity alone declares to all of mankind that the universe was made, and when it was made, it was in a perfect condition. It was made by an infinite personal God.

**Christianity Declares that Humans have Real, Moral Guilt**

Secondly, Christianity differs from all other viewpoints by declaring that the human problem is real moral guilt. People have actually sinned. People have actually violated the absolute righteousness standards of God. Unbelievers are in genuine rebellion against God. And you can't say that you're neutral, because to be neutral is just another way of being against God. You can't say, "I'm just indifferent." Indifference is hostility against God. Christianity says that you have a real moral guilt, and that means that you disobey God; you break His standards; and, you're rebellious against his demands toward you. Moral guilt is a real thing.

**Christianity Declares that Moral Guilt must be Removed**

Thirdly, Christianity declares that the internal conflict of moral guilt in unbelievers can only be resolved by actually removing that moral guilt. The only solution for the fact that we have violated God's standards is to correct that. Somehow the guilt has to be removed, and the penalty has to be paid. It cannot be ignored. You cannot find peace in your soul as an unbeliever by pretending to remove the guilt. You can't do it by pretending some kind of fiction is true. Even God cannot say, "Well, I'm going to forget your sin." Even God cannot say, "Well, we're going to forget that guilt," because that is not possible in view of what He is in His own holiness.

**Man Needs to be Justified**

So, man needs a declaration that he has been justified and only God can so declare him. That's our problem. God is not asking you to do anything. God is just trying to inform you that He has to be able to declare that you are justified, and therefore, you have absolute righteousness credited to your account. Now you are eligible for heaven.

God has declared the way that He will do that. This is the issue. These three are the distinctions of Christianity. Now the question naturally is, "Well, how is that going to do that? OK, I recognize that He's a personal, infinite God. He can speak to me, then, as person-to-person. I recognize that I am a sinner. I have moral guilt. I recognize that that has to be removed. There's no other solution for it. None of my good works can make up for that, because anything I do as a good work comes from my old sin nature. The old sin nature produces two things: either sins; or, human good. And God rejects both of those as evil.

So, we came to Romans 3:21, which began with those dramatic words: "But now." This is the turning point in the whole book of Romans. This is the turning point from the wrath of God on one side to salvation by grace on the other side. It introduces an absolute righteousness from God which is available to everyone. This absolute righteousness is secured completely apart from any human doing. That's what grace means. It means that God gives you something apart from any human doing. Don't try to pretend that you're going to do anything that is going to please God.

I knew a fellow one time that was 26 years old. He was in a panic because he wasn't married. He said, "I'm 26 year old, and I'm not married." There was something we needed here at church. He said, "Do you think that if I gave God a real gift for that, would He lead me to a nice young lady?" ... I tried to steer him off from trying to make any bargains with God. That is the natural man's mind, and that'll get you in a lot of trouble.

No, God is not going to make any deals with you. There's nothing you can give. That is the fantastic thing about it. This is without human doing. If you're an alcoholic, don't say, "God, I'm going to stop drinking, and I'll be saved." It doesn't matter whether you stop drinking or not. If you stop drinking, you're still not going to be saved. You're just going to be a dry alcoholic instead of a wet one. That's all. I don't care whatever else you do. It is not your sins. It is not your human doing. So, understand that.

Paul says, "But now:" That's coming over the summit of the mountain. All wrath; all the clouds of God's darkness; and, all the thunderbolts of His indignation are over there on one side. On the other side is the peace that Jesus gives as the sunshine of grace breaks through the clouds. That is a peace which He gives apart from our human doing.

**Three Facts that we must Tell Unbelievers**

So, when we speak to unbelievers, there are really three basic facts we want to convey to them. Get these well in mind. Ultimately, when a believer is ready to listen; when he has had his own confidence and his own excuses destroyed; and, the things upon which he is standing have been torn from him, then you're ready to press upon him: God *is* absolute righteousness. That's the kind of a God he is. Secondly, God *demands* absolute righteousness of everyone. God can only be surrounded by absolute righteousness – that which is compatible with Himself. Therefore, people who are going to be in heaven have to have absolute righteousness. Thirdly, press upon them that God *gives* this absolute righteousness only as a *gift*. God has provided it through Jesus Christ, and it is there ready for you to receive. That's the gospel. That's the whole big story that God has written this whole book to tell us. There it is. That's the core of it. A righteous God who demands absolute righteousness, and He is ready to give it to people who, in themselves, could never produce it in any other way.

"But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God is manifested." Remember that "apart from the law" means "apart from human doing." It is not necessarily the Law of Moses, though that was a system of doing. This means *any* system of doing – apart from any such system.

Let's go on to the next phrase in Romans 3:21, which says, "Being witnessed by the law and the prophets." I spoke to a man one time who was a Jew. He was an unbeliever. As I was speaking to him about the things that Jesus Christ taught, and that the Scriptures reveal, he said, "Yes, I'm acquainted with Paul, Dr. Danish. I'm acquainted with Paul. I have read what Paul said Jesus taught. I have read how Paul distorted what good rabbi Jesus of Nazareth taught." He was expressing a view which is very common among liberal thinkers; liberal teachers of the Word; liberal theologians; and, liberal preachers. And that is that Jesus Christ was a very simple, quiet, nice man who never made any of these claims about Himself being God. He never made any of these claims about the absolute uselessness of human works and so on. But it was the apostle Paul who came along, and the apostle Paul wrote a majority of the books of the New Testament, and he conveyed a picture of the teachings of Jesus Christ that completely distorted what Jesus taught.

**Witnessed by the Law and the Prophets**

Then, obviously, the Holy Spirit, knowing that such a notion was going to be suggested, we have immediately here the apostle Paul making this statement: "Being witnessed by the Law and the prophets." The apostle Paul is at this point saying, "Now, look. I'm not telling you something new. I'm not coming up with something that has never been taught before. I did not invent this. I am simply telling you what the Old Testament Scriptures themselves have taught us. And we're going to look in a moment to see how true that is.

**The Old Testament**

So, Paul says, "Being witnessed." And here's our good old legal Greek word again: "martureo." "Martureo" means "to testify to," as in a court of law. Here it refers to the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures concerning mankind's moral condition (the moral problem), and the absolute righteousness of God which must come from outside of himself to solve that moral problem. The Old Testament is quite full of this fact that man has a need, and that God alone can meet it; that man has a need, and that God is going to meet it; and, that those who trust in God to meet it are going to find that He has provided them with what they need to go to heaven.

So, the Old Testament has a witness. It is present tense. That means that the Old Testament constantly witnessed to this provision. It is passive, which means that this grace-given righteousness received this testimony. This absolute righteousness, which was to come as a gift, was testified to constantly. That's passive. And it's a statement of a principle. So, it was in the participle form.

**The Mosaic Law**

"Being witnessed to by." The word "by" is the Greek word "hupo." It is really "by means of." The idea here is "agency." "By means of (what Paul called) the Law and the prophets." The word "Law" is that Greek word "nomos." It means very specifically here in the Greek: "*The* Law." Therefore, it is a specific expression of law. Sometimes, as previously when he said, "Apart from the law," that "law" did not have a *the*in the Greek. Therefore, it was the concept of human works. But when it says, "*The* Law, it very definitely means that which we commonly think of as the Law, as the Mosaic Law, or the Mosaic system – the Ten Commandments, and so on. It is speaking here specifically in this word of the first five books of the Bible – those that Moses wrote. We call that the Pentateuch.

**The Prophets**

Then he is also speaking about the prophets (the "prophetes"). The "Prophetes" were the Old Testament writers who spoke for God. So, this expression, "the Law and the prophets," which Paul uses here, is actually a technical word for what we call the Old Testament Bible, or the Old Testament Scriptures, which were written primarily in Hebrew (though some of it in Aramaic). The Old Testament Bible is sometimes called "the Law and the Prophets."

**The Organization of the Old Testament Scriptures**

Let's look for a moment at the Old Testament Scriptures. Actually, the Jewish Hebrew Bible is divided into three sections. The first section is called "The Law," and it is the Law of Moses. It contains the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This was written by the unique prophet Moses. So, the first five books, that which is called the Mosaic Law, written by Moses, has a considerably distinctive respect for the Jew. That is viewed as the highest expression of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Then they had a second division called "The Prophets." The prophets were people who held the prophetic office, and they also had the gift of prophecy; that is, they not only had the gift of property, but they also were official prophets. The Jews put into this section: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and what we call the 12 minor prophets (the little book prophets – 12 of those). Those were all called "The Prophets." These were written by men who not only had the gift of prophecy, but they also had the office of prophecy.

Then the third section is called "The Psalms," as here in Luke 24:44, where this threefold division is referred to relative to the Old Testament Bible. It is called "The Psalms," but it is also known among the Jews as "The Writings." So, it might be called "The Law and the Prophets and the Writings," or "The Law and the Prophets and the Psalms." In any case, the writers of the third division were people who had the gift of prophecy, but they did not have the office of a prophet. Remember that the gift of prophecy did not only contain the ability to foretell the future, but it also had the ability to express the mind of God. It was not only foretelling, but it was telling forth what God's message was to the people at that time. In this third section of the Jewish Bible, you have Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Lamentations, Daniel, and Ezra and Nehemiah are one book in the Jewish Bible, and the last book of the Jewish Bible is Chronicles. It is not 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles like we have. They are combined into "Chronicles" – one book. So, if you add up the number of books of the Old Testament in the Jewish Bible, they have 24 books. We, in our divisions, have 39, because we separate 1 Kings and 2 Kings; 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles; and, so on.

So, many times in the Scriptures you'll have this expression that Paul uses: "The Law and the Prophets," as, for example, in Matthew 5:17, Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31, and Acts 13:15. In all those places, the expression "The Law and the Prophets" refers to the Old Testament Bible. Sometimes it will be referred to in this threefold category, as in Luke 24:44: "The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms." In any case, what we are referring to is specifically the Old Testament Scriptures.

So, what the apostle Paul is saying is that he is not inventing a whole new concept relative to human salvation, because naturally a lot of people are going to say, "Hey, wait a minute. What about all those animal sacrifices? What about all that blood that was spilled? What about that whole system in the Old Testament? That sounds like it's a lot different than what you're saying, Paul." So, the apostle Paul felt it was necessary to make clear that he is not presenting a totally new concept about a person's need for absolute righteousness, and about securing it apart from human doing, because the whole Old Testament was a "doing system:" "Do this, do this, do this, do this." The idea was that if you can do all the 613 commandments, you will demonstrate absolute righteousness. Nobody ever could, and nobody ever will.

This same principle of the need for righteousness is taught clearly then in the Old Testament. And Paul is going to prove this. He is going to use Abraham as an example. He's going to use David as an example. He gives us examples of men who needed absolute righteousness like you and I need it, and how God gave it to them on the basis of something that they did that expressed their acceptance of it. The basis of securing absolute righteousness is the same in the Old and the New Testament. What is that? It was the death of Christ on the cross. In the Old Testament, they looked forward to that provision. They didn't always see it as clearly as we understand it, on this side of the cross. We look back to it. But I don't care whether you're saved in the Old Testament or in the New Testament – whether you're saved on the other side of the summit, or whether you're saved ("but now") on this side of the summit. In both cases, your salvation is based upon the death of Christ on the cross.

I stress that because, every now and then, there are some people who don't understand what dispensationalism teaches. They accused dispensationalists of having two ways of salvation: in the Old Testament, one way; and, in the New Testament, another way. The basis of securing absolute righteousness was the cross of Christ. The salvation in the Old and New Testament was secured on the basis of faith in God's promise, and it was received as a grace gift. The basis of salvation was the death of Christ. The means of securing it was believing God. That was the whole name of the game. The details of the cross and of salvation we're not all that clear to the people in the Old Testament. When they brought their sacrifices, you and I read those sacrifices, and we had a series not so long ago on these Old Testament animal sacrifices. They're very rich. They're fantastic examples of the person and the work of Jesus Christ. They're quite obvious and clear to us. But they were not all that clear to the Jews who, at the time, on the other side of the summit, were bringing those sacrifices.

However, this is a difference of content. This is not a difference of basis to be saved (the cross of Christ); nor a difference of the means of securing it – believing what God has said. It's just that the content was not as clear.

So, this is what the Old Testament did. In various ways, it portrayed this divine provision for man's sins, but they did not always understand it. The one thing they did understand, though, was stated for them in Ezekiel 18:4, which says, "Behold, all souls are Mine. As the soul of the Father, so also the soul of the son is Mine. The soul that sins, it shall die." That's one thing they understood clearly: "The soul that sins, it shall die." And by the fact that they had sinned, and were guilty, and merited death (and I mean eternal death – separation from God, and conscious separation from God), they knew that. That was clear to them. They understood that.

The Old Testament sacrifices portrayed that something was necessary. Even if they did not understand the sacrifices, the way we do, the very fact that they sinned and had to bring sacrifice indicated to them that something had to be done that took a life: "It took a life to cover my sin. Somehow it took a provision to cover my sin. God could not just excuse me. Whatever they understood, they understood that much – that this animal's life has been given for my life.

Once Jesus Christ fulfilled all these Old Testament types on the cross, absolute righteousness was now ready to actually be given as a gift to all. We shall learn, in a little bit here in Romans 3, that in the Old Testament, God saved people on credit. He saved people because they trusted Him, but He had not yet actually provided the basis for salvation. Christ had not died. But when Jesus did die, he fulfilled all that was necessary to pay for the sins of the world, and to be the propitiation not only for the sins of believers, but for the sins of unbelievers. Then all those credit cards were called in, and all those on-time payments were paid with one blow.

The Old Testament, in various ways, portrayed this provision, and Jesus Christ fulfilled it all to give it to us as a gift.

The fact that Jesus Christ kept the Mosaic Law is sometimes pointed to as the reason we are saved. That is not true. It is true that Jesus was the only person who ever kept all 613 rooms of the Mosaic Law without a hitch. But we're not saved because He did that. All that did was demonstrate that He was eligible to die for the sins of the world, because you had to be perfectly sinless to die for the sins of the world. But we're not saved because He kept the Law. Sometimes you hear that – that we are saved because Jesus Christ kept the law for us. That's an insult to God. We're not saved because He was a perfect, absolutely righteous man. Keeping that moral Law of Moses simply made Him eligible to die. It revealed His sinlessness.

We receive our absolute righteousness on the basis of His death as our substitute on the cross. We are not saved by the fact that Jesus walked the streets of Palestine as a sinless man. That doesn't save us. We are saved because this sinless Man took our sins (bore them) and died in our place. That is the basis of our salvation. I hope you have that straight because that is a very important distinction.

The Mosaic Law expressed God's absolute righteousness, but we receive God's absolute righteousness without keeping the Mosaic Law. We receive it apart from that system. And that's the great thing. This was certainly demonstrated when Jesus died, and the veil was torn from top to bottom in the temple, and the absolute righteousness was thereby declared available to everybody. Everyone is welcome now in God's presence. Because we are in Christ, we have this righteousness reckoned to our account. We are the righteousness of God in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that.

It is not exactly right to say that we receive His righteousness. It is because we are in Him that we benefit by His righteousness. That is why you receive that blessing.

If somebody owns an airplane, and if you're fortunate enough to be in that airplane when it's traveling: because you're in the plane – that is why you are benefiting. It isn't because you own the plane. It is because you are with someone who does own it, and thus, you have benefited by being able to ride along. And that's what we do with Jesus Christ. We are in Him. We ride along with Him. Since He's fully accepted by the Father, you and I are also fully accepted.

So, let's go to this Old Testament for just a moment to see what Paul is referring to when he says, "Hey, I'm not making this up. This is not something new. This is actually what the Old Testament Scriptures have always taught. Here is the prime example: The first time the absolute righteousness of God is ever mentioned in the Old Testament is in Genesis 15:6 in connection with Abraham. The Bible says, "And he (Abraham) believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness." What did Abraham believe? All that we believe about Christ? No, he didn't know all those details. He didn't have that content, but he knew that God was going to make a provision for his sins. God said, "Abraham, trust Me. I will someday provide for your sins." And Abraham said, "I believe it." And God said, "That's all that's necessary. Absolute righteousness is now given to you on credit – on credit, Abraham, but I'm going to pay it. In time, I'll pay it." And Abraham immediately entered the family of God. This is the first mention.

Galatians 3:17 tells us that the Mosaic Law came along 430 years after this incident. The point that Galatians makes is that the Mosaic Law could in no way change the basis of salvation. You're not saved by keeping animal sacrifices. That only has to do with your relationship to the theocratic government of Israel. When you belong to Israel, you belong to a theocracy. When you sinned, you put yourself out of temporal fellowship with the head of the government, the king. And the animal sacrifices brought you back into that relationship.

If you were a believer, you were very faithful about bringing those sacrifices, but those animal sacrifices did not save you. The Bible makes it very clear that the blood of bulls and goats cannot bring us forgiveness of sins. But they did bring you temporal forgiveness to put you in the right relationship with God, who was the head of the theocracy. It did put you in a position where you could function, even as an unbeliever, within the Commonwealth of Israel.

However, the Mosaic Law in no way affected the basis of salvation. People under the Law were saved just like Abraham before the Law – by faith in the provision of God. And as history progressed, that provision became clear. As the Old Testament unfolded, more and more information was given as to just how God was going to provide this absolute righteousness. But that it was to be provided by Him as a gift, there was no doubt.

So, the Mosaic Law clearly witnessed to the fact of the absolute righteousness from God, but in no way could a sinner provide it.

If you move over to another book of the Law here, in Deuteronomy 5, we have another example of the fact that the Old Testament clearly portrayed this same concept. Deuteronomy 5:22 says, "These words the Lord spoken unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the clouds and the thick darkness, with a great voice. And he added no more. And He wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me." Here Moses is speaking. What's he talking about? He's talking about the time that, on Mount Sinai, God descended; met with Moses; and, spoke with him. And God declared the Mosaic Law, and the people standing down below heard it. The people who were assembled heard God speaking in history. That's what's important. There was a time when people stood, and they actually heard God's voice speaking from heaven. This is a historical event. It should be in all of our school books, and in all of our history books – the time that people heard God speak from heaven. It was right here at Mount Sinai.

The standard of righteousness is declared in verse 23: "And it came to pass when you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, for the mountain did burn with fire, that you came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes and your elders. And you said, 'Behold the Lord our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of fire. We have seen this day that God talks with man, and he lives. Now, therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore, then we shall die." So, why would they say that? Because the principle that we have already read previously from Ezekiel, that: "The soul that sins: it shall die." They had been taught this, and they knew that they were listening to a God of absolute righteousness. And they said, "We don't qualify to stand in His presence here at the foot of this mountain while this is going on, and He's up there. There's no way. We have to get out of this. Moses, you talk to Him. You tell us what He says. We dare not stand in His presence."

So, they dealt with God on the basis of an historical intrusion of God into history, and into their experience. So, they knew that He was a living God. And this established for them the absolute righteousness of God, and their absolute lack of it. They knew there was a wall between them and God.

So verse 26 says, "For who is there, of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speak out of the midst of the fire, as we have heard, and lived?" Who's going to do that? There is no way.

So, what what's the Scripture saying? As the descendants of the Jews read this, they said, "God is absolutely perfect. He is sinless. He is absolute righteousness. He is justice, and we are anything but that. Woe is us. How can we face Him? How will we dare die and go out into eternity? And if you're here today without Christ, and you're still persisting in being a rebel against receiving Christ as Savior, I'll give you that advice: Don't die. Just don't die, because you'll be in the same boat that these people feared that they would. You will be facing the kind of a God who has absolute righteousness. And they had nothing with which to be able to be compatible in His presence, for they lacked that righteousness.

Near the end of this last book that Moses wrote, in Deuteronomy 30:6, we read, "And the Lord you God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your seed, to love the Lord you God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live." And there's the answer. They feared, "How would they come into the presence of this God?" They knew from that experience that absolute righteousness was necessary. Then Moses comes here at the end of the book, and he says, "I'm going to tell you how you're going to get it. God's going to give it to you. He's going to change your heart: circumcise your heart. That means he's going to bring you into faith in His provision. The result will be that you will express what an absolutely righteous person does. He loves God with all his heart, and with all his soul. And the result will be that you'll live." He's talking about eternal life. God will give it to you. That's how you'll get it.

So, people who read the Old Testament – they knew it. There was no doubt with them about it. Paul was quite right when he said, "I'm not bringing you something brand new. This is an old story in the Old Testament."

Notice Psalm 32:1-2. We'll turn to David now, and his testimony: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." David had observed the blessedness of the sinner whose sins had been paid for by God as a great gift.

In Romans 4:6, we shall in time read Paul's reference to this very passage. Paul says, "Even as David also described the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputes righteousness apart from their works; saying, 'Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.'" There you have Paul quoting David to show that in the Old Testament, David said, "God is going to make the provision, and then God will not impute judgment to you. Instead, He will impute to you the righteousness of God. And Paul says, "That is great." Happy is the man to whom God will do that.

That is the fantastic provision. This is the righteousness of God imputed to the account (to the credit) of the man who is under the salvation that God has provided through faith in Christ. The joy is absolute righteousness apart from human doing. Notice that. Paul stresses that this is without your works. This is not the sins that you have committed. This is only on the basis of your having avoided unbelief.

Slip over to Isaiah 45:8. This is another Old Testament declaration concerning this righteousness: "Drop down you heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up (or blossom up) together. I the Lord have created it." Here, he was comparing it to a flower that is going to grow. From heaven above the skies will pour down righteousness. What kind of righteousness? God's absolute righteousness. The earth is going to open like the earth is open to receive a seed. Then it will bring forth the twin plants of salvation with absolute righteousness – springing up together. And who has done this? "I, the Lord, have created this plant. I, the Lord will prepare this and give it to you – these two blossoming together.

Isaiah 51:5-6 says, "My righteousness is near. My salvation has gone forth. And My arms shall judge the peoples. The coasts shall wait upon Me, and on My arm they shall trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath. For the heaven shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall grow like a garment. And they that dwell therein shall die in like manner. But my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." Here the prophet is speaking of a righteousness which God will give that provides an eternal salvation. While the earth and everything else is temporary and passing away, God says, "I'm going to give you something that you'll be able to live with forever. It'll give you eternal life."

The New Testament often looks back to the Old Testament and quotes what it has to say concerning this issue of absolute righteousness. Let's look at one. Luke 24:25-32. We'll not read it entirely. We'll read part of it here. This has to do with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus on the Resurrection Day, late in the evening on that first Easter Sunday. They're all upset by what has happened. Notice a very interesting thing. They're walking along this road to a town called Emmaus. Jesus suddenly appears, and He falls in step with them. He says, "Why are you discouraged? Why is there this depression that I sense?"

So, they tell Him that they had hoped so much for Jesus. And now He's gone. He's not even in the grave. Somebody must have stolen Him. We thought that He was the messiah. We thought that He was the one who was going to bring us the absolute righteousness. Now it's all over. Verse 25: "Then He (Jesus) said to them, 'O, foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken." He's reprimanding them for not understanding the necessity of His death to provide absolute salvation, because the prophets have made it clear: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?"

Notice how Jesus solved spiritual problems. It was not by giving somebody a kick in the pants with some emotional jag. Verse 27: "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures in things concerning Himself." He went back to Bible doctrine. The only thing that'll solve your problem and my problem is Bible doctrine. The more we know of it, the more stable we're going to be, and the more our perspective will be aligned with God's viewpoint.

Verse 28: "And they drew near unto the village to which they went, and He made as though he would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, 'Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' And He went into to tarry them. And it came to pass, as He sat eating with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them." When he did that, they looked at one another, and a bell rang in their minds. And they looked at each other, and without saying a word, they said to each other, "Are you thinking what I'm thinking? Did you see the way He did that? You know who did that. You know who used to do it just like that. This must be ..."

And at that moment, Jesus vanished out of their sight: "And their eyes were opened, and they recognized Him and He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another, 'Did not our heart burn?'" I like this verse: "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us along the way, and while he opened up to us the Scriptures?"

What was their hearts? This whole story of absolute righteousness, entirely provided by God, as a great gift, apart from anybody's doing or anybody's meriting it, or anybody's promises. It was just: "I'm ready to give it to you if you're ready to take it."

**It's Dumb to go to Hell**

You know, it's dumb to go to hell. It really is dumb under this kind of a system. You've got everything to gain, and nothing to lose, by simply accepting what God has provided. All the human philosophies, and all the human religions, miss it completely. What they offer you will never satisfy the yearning in your soul after God. But this provision will.

You can look up Jeremiah 23:6. There we are going to be called by Jehovah: "our righteousness." We will be called by His name.

You can look up Isaiah 53:11. It says that many are to receive absolute righteousness through the Messiah Savior, but it didn't explain how. It just said that they would.

Acts 3:18 and Acts 10:43 refer to the fact that the Old Testament prophets foretold the suffering of Jesus Christ and the salvation which was to come through Him to those who trusted in Him.

Isaiah 53:5-6 is that dramatic passage that tells how the Messiah was to bear the suffering for the sins of mankind, to make absolute righteousness available to all of us.

So, I hope that just with that brief, cursory survey through part of the Old Testament Scriptures, you'll see what the apostle Paul means when he very carefully interjects that expression: "Being witnessed by the Law and the prophets" – that he is telling how people are saved on the basis of the death of Christ through the vehicle of faith in that death, and in the promise of God, to make provision of giving us absolute righteousness via what His Son did, and that that was clearly declared in the Old Testament. Paul says, "I'm telling you an old story, but we've come to the other side of this summit. We've been climbing up the dark side of the mountain, and now we've come across the summit. Christ has died. Christ has resurrected. The God-Man is in heaven. Because there's a man in heaven, we as human beings can be there someday too. We're up at the peak. We're going on the other side (the sunshine side). But now, all this which was promised has been fulfilled.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

[**Back to the Romans index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/romans.htm)

[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)