***That God Might be Just  
RO32-02***

**© Berean Memorial Church of Irving, Texas, Inc. (1977)**

**Propaganda**

I want to read an article out of a publication called "The Wittenburg Door," and the title of this particular article is "Popsicle Evangelism:"

"I was led to Christ by a popsicle. I believe it was orange-flavored, and appeared immediately after I and a number of other children had sat through Mrs. Dalton's flannel graph Bible story. I say that because the prospect of getting my weekly popsicle was sufficient to keep me sitting through what were hours of tedium until the message of the gospel finally began to slip into my consciousness. During the fifth grade year, I must have seen Christ up there on the flannel graph board, knocking on the door of a big red heart at least two dozen times. Later on, in eighth grade, I was persuaded to go to church camp by the glowing report of a buddy who guaranteed me that, once in the camp, there were any number of 'slick chicks' (that's about 1956 terminology) who would be more than willing to hold hands and kiss, and generally be your girlfriend for the week. Sure enough, I met Donna at Pine Valley Bible camp, and held my first hand. I never got around to kissing her, but I did rededicate my life to the Lord.

"In high school, it was a great stand-up comedian turned evangelist (or evangelist turned stand-up comedian). I never could decide which. He once again captured my attention and convinced me of the value of personal Bible study. Entering college, it was an All-Pro linebacker who bolstered my courage and helped me to see that being a Christian need not take me out of the mainstream of what I wanted as an aspiring young athlete. In fact, he hinted it would possibly enable me to be the best possible athlete I could be; give me a platform for Christian witness; and, earn me begrudging, and therefore, all the more sweet respect of my classmates to boot.

"In the years that followed, his basic outlook was repeated by a succession of Christian entertainers; political leaders; ex-dopers; and, reformed members of the new left who had found real peace in Jesus. Let's see: food; sex; humor; sports; music; politics; drugs; and, revolution all had their role to play in catching my attention, and selling me on hanging onto the Christian faith.

"The dynamics of the process were very simple but powerful. Someone was astute enough to read the audience of which I was a part. This involved identifying what it was we really believed in as fifth graders; junior high students; senior high students; collegians, etc., and then demonstrating to us that, at worst, being a Christian was not in conflict with these values. And at best, (most often, at best) it was a positive factor in realizing these values.

"It was a very basic technique: Great salesman and evangelists from Mr. Fuller Brush to Adolf Hitler, Goebbels, and Mao have used it to perfection. Call it 'relating to the youth culture.' Call it 'reading the audience.' Or call it simply 'good salesmanship.' Call it whatever you want, and build as elaborate a rationale around it as you desire. When all of the euphemisms have been dropped, it is still naked propaganda. The role propaganda plays in our culture and in our churches is grossly misunderstood. Most of us think of it as the telling of lies. Nothing could be further from the truth. For modern propaganda to be effective, it must always use true facts. The trick is to skillfully manipulate these facts into a kind of fiction that will promote the corporation; political party; or, theology. Once this is accomplished, the propagandist need only convince you (the ‘propagandee’) that your desires coincide with his, and that tying in with his product or program will be the surest way to promote your own.

"What better arrangement could there be? As any good capitalist would remark: "Everybody wins." You don't have to make any hard decisions. And the propagandist has signed you up or registered a decision.

"A commercial for Yamaha motorcycles I heard recently illustrates this entire process beautifully. The announcer began by saying something like, 'Remember that great fishing spot you once found, and swore you'd come back to next weekend? Well, instead of the next weekend, it has been over three years, hasn't it? What do you find? A giant housing development.' Note what has happened. In that clever introduction, some of the greatest issues haunting our consciences are elicited: ecology; and, overpopulation.

"As the announcer goes on sympathetically, we all are feeling a mixture of rage and sadness. But most importantly, we are instantly convinced that Yamaha is indignant too. Yamaha understands. Yamaha is on our side. We cry out inside: 'What must we do to be saved, Yamaha.' The announcer speaks soothingly: 'Don't worry. All you need to do is buy a Yamaha, and you can ride off to some new and heretofore inaccessible place to go fishing.' And with tears streaming down our faces, we see ourselves riding off to some unspoiled spot where we can at last find respite from the noise and bustle of the city. Peace, love, and ecology equal Yamaha. Very effective.

"Except every one of us who loves nature knows what a curse those damnable bikes are on ecology and solitude. But I know that Yamaha sold a motorcycle to someone by convincing him that everybody can't be happy; that all values can't be realized; and, that (miracle of miracles) those noisy little monstrosities can actually help to preserve the great out of doors.

"The moral issues involved in this kind of skillful manipulation are some of the gravest facing mankind. I believe that it can be demonstrated conclusively that propaganda is not only the mainstay of the advertising industry, and hence our entire economy, but is the political necessity of every modern state, be it democracy or dictatorship, and the emotional and spiritual craving of every person living in those states. Its power to circumvent the problem of asking persons to make free and rational decisions combine its all-pervasiveness to give it demonic power over the hearts and minds of people everywhere.

"And what happens when Christians employ what are essentially the same methods to preach the gospel? At that moment, the gospel ceases to be the gospel, no matter how orthodox the propositions. For when the preacher succumbs to the temptation to appropriate a current social myth to promote the gospel, he does so at the cost of robbing men and women of the opportunity to truly make a decision for or against Jesus Christ. When God is advanced as a symbol or exemplar for what we already believe in, then we no longer are forced to make any kind of decision, but simply to go on believing in what we already hold to be true.

"The problem of the Christian athlete hinges on this issue. What do we really communicate when the preponderance of testimony is given, and evangelistic rallies are given by star athletic performers? What happens to our message when the same people who are the spokesmen and embodiment of the world's values become our main spokesmen as well? The same question can be asked of our penchant for using entertainers in communicating Christianity. Who gives these people authority but the pagan world in which we live?

"In ancient times, when one nation was conquered by another, the vanquished people would destroy all their gods. The theology behind such behavior was the conviction that when your nation lost, so did your gods. Such is the nature of a state religion or a culture of Christianity. Its power lies not in its god, but in the degree to which that god has been identified with other concerns, particularly things like success and happiness. As long as we can come to Christ clinging to our false gods, most of us will come. But the Christ we worship is not the Christ of the gospel, but the antichrist of the world.

"The objection may be raised: 'But didn't God use those popsicles and values to bring you to repentance and faith? And look at the thousands who have come to Christ through the witness of a famous Christian athlete or entertainer?'

"My reply is that if all the statistics of all the evangelistic crusades reported in just the last ten years were accurate, then we would be living on a planet fully Christianized several times over. I don't believe the small number of people who actually stick can be adequately explained by the parable of the seed and the sower. Our use of propaganda methods to get decisions has to figure heavily in this foolish statistical travesty. Furthermore, the heretical notion that the ends justify the means has no place in the Christian faith. I was not born again by any human method, but by the Spirit of God. If anything can be said about the role of all those methods, it would be that God has saved me in spite of them, not because of them.

"Perhaps it is at this point that the whole issue really comes to a head. Do we believe in the transcendent power of God to save, or are we gripped, like all of modern pagan society, with the power of our techniques to save? It may be because we no longer truly believe in the former that we feel so compelled to engage in the latter."

That summarizes very adequately what is on our currency of confusion of the gospel.

**Justification by Faith**

Today, I'd like to tie up the things that we were talking about in the previous session. So, will you please turn to Romans 3 once more as we finish the section on "Justification by Faith?" Sinners are justified in the eyes of God on the basis of a redemption price which has been paid by Jesus Christ on the cross. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God bearing the sins of the world has propitiated the justice of God's character. We see that this propitiation is in His blood. The benefits of this propitiation, however, are received on the basis of faith. God's dealing with us is always by faith. The basis is the blood of Christ; His little blood; and, His literal death, as well as His spiritual death.

**Propitiation**

This propitiation, we have in the previous session, was, first of all, for God's own benefit. The reason for this is that, over the centuries, God has permitted obvious sinners to enter paradise after death. He was, in effect, overlooking their sins. In the previous session, we looked at some of the great men of the Old Testament, and found that they were scoundrels of sin. And yet these scoundrels, these evil people, ended up in God's presence forever in eternity when they died.

**God is Still Righteous**

Well, the sins of these people had not been punished. So, the demands of God's justice had not been met. God says, "The wages of sin is death." God says that sin cannot go unpunished. Yet the Old Testament has example after example of the fact the people who were sinners went into God's presence, though their sins had not been paid for.

Well, this condition made it appear that God was inconsistent with His own essence, and that God was, in effect, Himself being unrighteous. So, there was a scandal. There was a questioning of the integrity of God Himself relative to His own essence.

Well, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in time covered the punishment that was due to sinners from Adam to the death of Christ on the cross. Men misconstrued the patience of God with these sinners, and they thought God was simply being indifferent toward sin, as if God had an old sin nature. And there were people who literally thought that they were going to get away with murder, because it was obvious that people were going into God's presence whose sins had not been paid for.

However, Psalm 50:16 presents to us what God's attitude was in times past when He was overlooking sin – when sin had not actually been paid for. The psalmist says, "But unto the wicked, God says, 'What do you have to do to declare My statutes, or that you should take My covenant in your mouth, seeing that you hate instruction, and cast My words behind you? When you saw the thief, then you consented with him. And you have been partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil, and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother. You slander your own mother's son. These things you have done, and I kept silence.'"

There you have the specific declaration of what the issue was. Men were guilty of sin, and men were guilty of sin with a deliberate attitude about it. They were thinking that, after all, God doesn't really do anything about this. And God says, "Yes, you are guilty of sin; and, yes, I was silent. I watched, and I didn't say anything about it: "And you thought that I was altogether one as yourself (another old sin nature with another old sin nature). But I will reprove you, and set them in order before your eyes. Now consider this, you who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Whoever offers praise glorifies Me, and to him that orders his conduct to right, I will show the salvation of God."

So, way back here, in the time of the psalmists, God was trying to alert people not to make the assumption that was so easy to make – that God was ignoring sin; and, that God was very much like parents that say to a child, "If you do this, you are not going to have this treat I promised you." Well, the kid goes ahead and does that, and then he cries a little, and the mother says, "Well, OK, don't do it again. You can have the treat." People thought that that's how God is. God says, "Don't steal. Don't lie. Don't be guilty of adultery. Don't be guilty of murder." And people were stealing, and lying, and adulterating, and murdering one another, and they were going to heaven. People thought, "God really doesn't come down on sin." It impugned the character of God.

However, the psalmist said, "Be careful. While God is silent, He is still God. Do not forget God," meaning do not forget what constitutes the nature and the essence of God, because I'm going to tear you in pieces. My wrath is coming." There was a reason why God was overlooking sin.

Now, God, of course, could have dealt with sin immediately by simply casting people into hell. He could have destroyed people the first time they sinned. But that was not His way in times past before the cross. It was overlooking sin, and giving sinners a chance, while He was preparing a way out for them.

So, for this reason, because this was the condition and this was the misconception about God, Paul has stressed to us in Romans 3 that the first benefit of the propitiation of Christ on the cross was to God Himself. The suffering and the death of the atonement of Jesus Christ really revealed God's true attitude toward the sin of mankind. And that suffering and that death and that payment exonerated God from the charge of condoning sin. God cannot forgive sin apart from the payment of the cross of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, God could not forgive sin. All God could tell Abraham was that if he trusted Him for his salvation, someplace down the line, God would take action which would make it possible for God to forgive Abraham his sin. In the meantime, He said, "I'm going to let you into My heaven. I'm going to let you into Paradise in Hades, but you're there on credit.”

Now, suppose that suddenly the cross had not taken place. Suddenly, all these people, from Adam on down, had looked to God and said, "I'm trusting you to save me," and God said, "All right, I'm giving you salvation. I'm giving it to you on credit." Suppose that suddenly something happened and the cross had not taken place, and the payment for sin had not been made. Then what would have happened? Every one of those people would have had their salvation repossessed. Every one of them would have been evicted from heaven. That's what would have happened. Their condition was not the same as ours is today. You can never be evicted from heaven. Your salvation can never be repossessed. But had Christ not paid the price for sin, they would have been doomed.

Hebrews 9:7-15 actually explain to us this passage in Romans 3:25 – God overlooking sin, and God being righteous in doing this. Hebrews 9:7 reads: "But into the second (that is the holy of holies part of the tabernacle) the high priest went alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people; the Holy Spirit thus signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing;" that is, in the Old Testament order of things, people did not have access into the presence of God, thus the veil separating them: "Which was the figure for the time then present in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience, which stood only in foods and drinks and various washings and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of the reformation."

This passage is telling us that until the fulfillment, the setting of things right, the Old Testament order of the rituals, and everything that was involved in it, didn't do anything relative to the fact that a person stood condemned before God. It didn't do anything relative to the fact that God was passing over sins. And that's why God had to pass over sins, because none of these animal sacrifices gained any forgiveness. None of these rituals provided any cleansing.

Verse 11 says, "But Christ, being come a high priest of good things to come by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands; that is to say not of this building, neither by the blood of goats and calves; that is, He did not come by animal blood, but by His own blood. He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean sanctifies the purifying of the flesh a ritual righteousness, how much more then shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God. And for this cause, He is the mediator of the New Testament; that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance."

Under the Old Testament, there was an agreement with God to provide salvation. It could not be fulfilled until a New Testament or a new covenant, was established in His blood; that is, in what He did upon the cross.

So, God was glorified in the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. And He was glorified whether anybody believes in Christ as Savior or not. He was glorified because God had to have His character vindicated for all the sins that He had passed over in ages past, and yet permitted those people to enter His heaven.

**To Declare His Righteousness**

However, picking this up now at Romans 3:26, there was another problem. There was another thing that God wanted to establish. The first motivation in the propitiation of Christ was to show that God was still righteous in the way He had dealt with sin. Verse 26 then picks up a second motivation of the propitiation of Christ, and that is: "To declare, I say at this time, His righteousness." The words "to declare" are the Greek word "pros," which is a preposition, plus the same word we had in the previous session: "endeixis." The word "pros" means "for," and it introduces the second motivation of God in the death of Christ on the cross. It introduces the second motivation for Jesus Christ being a propitiatory sacrifice.

Perhaps you'll remember that in the previous session, instead of "pros," we had the word "eis" plus "endeixis." The word is a little different. And there's a reason for that. It is because he is going to contrast something in verse 26 that God wants to establish as an immediate concern of God, and then something He wants to establish as a later concern of God. This preposition "pros" speaks about what is immediately in the future. The preposition "eis" speaks about what is a little further down the line. So, the Holy Spirit changes the prepositions though He uses the same noun "endeixis."

"Endeixis" means "a pointing out" or "a demonstration." However, this time, it has the definite article. It is *the* demonstration. It is *the* pointing out, and it is referring back. It is tying this back to verse 25 where, we read, "to declare (this same word – to point out) God's absolute righteousness for having passed over sins in the past." Please get that straight in verse 25, if you missed it in the previous session. The word "remission" is very, very wrong there. This Greek word is used only here (in this one place) in the New Testament, and it does not mean remission or forgiveness. It means passing over. God was passing over sins.

Now, it is this specific act of passing over that is being referred to in verse 26, back to what was spoken of in verse 25. So, it is the passing over, and we would translate this as "For the demonstration in the immediate presence of something."

The words "I say" are not in the Greek. He is not just repeating what he said in verse 25. Actually, we have two time elements. He is talking in the latter part of verse 25 of something that took place in the Old Testament. And in the first part of verse 26, he is talking about something that takes place then in the present time.

"To declare at this time." The word at" is the word "en," which means "in," and it is simply indicating a point of location. "The present time" is the Greek word "nun" plus the Greek word "kairos." The word "nun" means "now," and the word "kairos" means "time:" "the now time." It is the word for time in terms of a definite period of time. It is not just time in general. It is a segment of time. He is speaking here of the idea of present time. In other words, he's contrasting that in the Old Testament, God has been demonstrated to have been righteous by passing over sins. He did not do an evil thing in doing that. The propitiation of Christ covered what God passed over.

However, Paul says, "I want to impress upon you something else: that right now, in the present time, in this specific era of history in which we live (after the cross), God's character is also righteous – at this time, His righteousness." "His" refers to God. And righteousness, again, is the word "dikaiosune." This again refers not to something God does, but to the attribute; the quality; and, the inherent character of God – the attribute of righteousness. This is absolute righteousness. It is the same thing that he's been talking about in this context.

So, Paul is saying, "In the past, God has been shown to have been absolutely righteous. But now in the present, how does he deal with people? In the same way. God is going to be absolutely righteous in how he deals with human beings. And God, who proclaimed His righteousness in dealings in the past with sin, is also proclaiming His righteousness in dealing with sin in the present. So, if you think that the God of wrath in the past has somehow now been satisfied relative to the demands of His justice, so that in the present you do not face that kind of wrath, then you are very seriously mistaken. In the past, he did overlook sin. But He was just in doing so. In the present now, we read in the previous session, He's telling everyone, "Get straight. The price has now been paid, and I will not overlook sin, but I will bring judgment immediately upon you.

All of this indicates the fact that God has a plan in this matter of salvation. This is not just some accidental way of how things work out. God actually has a plan – a carefully worked-out plan. Passing over the sins in the Old Testament was only possible because God had a plan. God knew where He was going. While people were whispering about God's character, and about God being unjust in what He was doing, God smiled, because God knew where He was going. The offering of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world was a decision of God. It was a decision that God made. God thought about having His Son die for the sins of the world, and God, furthermore, executed it.

It's not important that the Jews instigated the death of Christ. It's not important that the gentiles actually nailed Him to the cross and executed Him. The thing that's important is that God was out to produce three dramatic purposes. That's why we've said that these verse, Romans 3:24-26, are the Mount Everest of Scripture. This is the Acropolis. This is the highest spiritual point in the Word of God, because here you have declared the three motivations (the three purposes) of God in sending His Son to the cross: First was to show that in the past He was righteous. Now He shows that in the present, God is still dealing with sin only on a righteous basis.

So, Isaiah 53:10 tells us that, in the past, God had a deliberate plan in mind relative to His Son, Jesus Christ. And it was a plan that included suffering. God was going to punish. He decided to punish His Son: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He has put Him to grief. When You shall make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed," and so on. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him (speaking about the Savior). And certainly we have learned how He was bruised.

In Acts 2:23, men acted out God's plan of salvation. God thought up this plan, and God executed it: "Him (Jesus Christ) being delivered by the determinate council and foreknowledge of God;" that is, God planned it in the past: "You, at this point in time, have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." People put Jesus Christ on the cross, but God, in eternity past, planned it. Why? Because God had in mind these three purposes of Romans 3: "I'm going to show that in the Old Testament I did pass over sins, and people who were sinners with sins unpaid for came into paradise. But I was righteous in doing it. I did not compromise My righteousness. I'm going to show that now, since the cross, I deal with people only on the basis of absolute righteousness. There is a way for a sinner to enter heaven, but it has to be on the basis that I provided. Well, God made that plan, and people simply executed what God had planned in order to bring this about.

There is one more verse that we may add to that in Ephesians 1:11: "The plan is God's, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined needed according to the purpose of Him, who works all things after the counsel of His own will." So, if you have some big hotshot plans to outmaneuver God, or if you have some great plans that God is somehow going to act in some way other than absolute righteousness this side of the cross, don't count on it. God works all things according to a plan, and that plan demands that nothing in His character be compromised. And that's the whole point. Romans is saying, "God does nothing to compromise His character."

**God's Wrath**

So, the divine wrath against sin must fall. There never was any other intention on God's part. God never intended not to express his wrath. The plan was right all along, and He executed it. Human unbelief tries to eliminate this idea that God is bringing His wrath down upon sinners. So, they have a problem with: how can God be just, and yet not execute wrath?

This wrath has to fall, therefore, and it will either fall on Jesus Christ, whom you accept as your substitute, or it'll fall upon you directly, and you must bear it alone. I don't know what your condition is today. You may not be a believer. I can tell you that you have a problem, as we have indicated to you, that God has designed this plan of salvation. God has also designed those who are capable of entering into it. You may not be a Christian. You may be outside of the family of God. You may have heard me just now say that the wrath of God is going to fall either upon Jesus Christ (that's the plan), or it's going to fall upon you if you reject Him as Savior. And it may have left you cold. If it did, you're in a lot of trouble, because you have not been moved by the Spirit of God to realize the terror of the situation that is upon you.

God is going to act in perfect righteousness. He always intended to; He always determined to; and, He always has. And while it looked bad for a while in the Old Testament, God knew where He was going, and He has demonstrated His integrity. This side of the cross, He's acting in the same way.

Does this mean God is angry at you because you're a sinner? No, He cannot be angry at you because He is love. But He also has to judge sin because He is justice. He abhors sin, and He must judge it, because of exactly who He is.

So, there is no evading this principle – that on the one hand, God loves you, and on the other hand, God abhors your sin. On the one hand, God is seeking a way out for you, but on the other hand, He is going to exercise His wrath against you. Hebrews 10:28-31 put it this way: "He that despised Moses' Law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. How much more sorer punishment do you suppose that you shall be thought worthy, who has trodden underfoot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant with which He was sanctified an unholy thing, and has done despite unto the Spirit of grace? How much do you think is going to be worse for you? It's going to be a lot worse.

Under the Law of Moses, two or three witnesses was all that was necessary to execute capital punishment. God is going to execute eternal punishment on the basis of His own judgments.

Let's add to that a couple more verses. Hebrews 10:30: "For we know Him that has said, 'Vengeance belongs unto me. I will recompense,' says the Lord. And again, the Lord shall judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." God always intended to exercise His wrath. He did in the Old Testament when He was passing over sin, and He does it today.

Therefore, in Hebrews 2:1-2, we have this: "Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast in every transgression, and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so grace salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him?" Well, the answer is that you will not escape. It will be a horrendous judgment that will come upon us, because God is just.

He wanted to establish three things by the satisfying work of Christ relative to the justice of God on the cross. One was that He was righteous for passing over sins temporarily in the Old Testament. Secondly, God is at this point in time today, in dealing with humanity, is still acting on the basis of perfect righteousness. But that was not enough.

**That He Might be Just**

The third point (the third motive) of God was the greatest thing of all. This is the marvelous beauty of this passage, because this is where it was all headed for. That's in the last phrase of verse 26: "That He might be just, and the justifier of him who believes in Jesus." The word "that" is the preposition "eis." This indicates purpose. It is the third purpose in the propitiation of Jesus Christ. God, as ruler of the universe, seeks to save sinners from hell while maintaining His own absolute righteousness.

Now, that's a dilemma. That was a dilemma – not with God, but with people. How can a holy God take sinners into heaven? And here is the word that introduces the final and the ultimate goal of God. The previous word we had was "pros." This is what God says, "I want to do now. I want to show. I want to make it clear immediately that I am a God of righteousness in how I deal with people today. And the reason I am," and then he uses "eis," which is the farther-down-the-line word, because: "I have an ultimate goal in mind. I want to do something. I want to be something at this time:" "That He might be just." The word "be" is that Greek verb "eime." This declares the status of God's state of being. It is present tense. This is constantly true of God. This is what God always wants to be. It is active. It is God's choice to be this. And then it is infinitive, indicating that this is what is God's purpose to be. And what is that purpose? "To be righteous."

God is determined to be absolute righteousness. He is absolute righteousness. He will never be anything else. He will not compromise that. No matter what His actions may have appeared to be doing, He will never be anything but righteous. He has no sin.

Now, how can God reach down; take hold of a sinner; and, bring him into heaven without God getting dirty in the process? How could God reach down; take hold of you or me; and, take us into heaven without contaminating Himself and heaven in the process? Whatever He does, He says, "I'm going to be righteous. Whatever else you think about Me, and whatever else you understand about what I'm doing, I'm going to make it absolutely clear to you that I will not compromise My absolute righteousness." Yet, He has to take sinners into heaven. That's what this third motive declares – that He Himself would be absolutely righteous, and at the same time, the justifier.

**The Justifier**

The justifier is the verb of this noun. That means the one who pronounces a sinner to have absolute righteousness. This must not be a fiction. This must be true. God says, "You're justified. You have absolute righteousness." He can't say that and still retain His own righteousness. So, here's where the tension lies. God wants to keep His absolute righteousness. He wants to tell you and me that we have absolute righteousness. We know something about ourselves. We know we're sinners. God has already demonstrated in two points here that: in the past, God maintained His righteousness, and God has indicated that; and, that in the present, He is maintaining His righteousness. For what purpose? Because down the line, this merciful, fantastic, marvelous, loving God says, "I'm not just satisfied to maintain My righteousness. Oh, I could do that. I could immediately take everybody who sinned, and I could cast them into hell. My righteousness would be perfectly maintained." That's not enough.

God says, "What I want to do is keep My righteousness, and still be able to say: 'You sinners are righteous.'" And that was the fantastic thing that the propitiation of Jesus Christ on the cross provided – how to be the justifier. This word is present tense – how God could constantly be this. It's active. This is how God Himself could be the one who says this. It's participle – a principle declared here. This is how God could say something of the sinner.

**Those Who Believe**

Then here's a very unique phrase in Scripture. What person can God say this about? God cannot say this about everyone. God cannot say about everyone that: "You are justified." There are some liberal mentalities that try to say that. They try to say that God is the God of such love that everybody is going to go to heaven. But the Scriptures here make it clear that God can maintain His Own righteousness, and still tell you that you have absolute righteousness, providing that you have done one thing: "Who believes in Jesus."

**Faith in Jesus**

The word "believe" is actually the preposition "ek," which means "out of," and the word "pistis," which means "faith." So, the expression literally is "out from faith," or simply "the one who has faith." Faith in what? Faith in the United Nations? Faith in your best friend? Faith in your preacher? Faith in your church? Faith in your denomination? Faith in yourself? Faith in faith? No. It is very specific. Only one kind of faith is going to count with God, and that's the faith which is in "Iesous." It's the faith in Jesus. This is the faith of which Jesus is the object. We would translate this as "the one who has faith in Jesus."

This is an emphatic way of expressing the condition of the sinner who is declared justified. And it's a tender way. It is rather a little bit, in some respects, an unusual way for Paul to speak of the Lord Jesus Christ: "The one who trusts in Jesus." There's a note of tenderness there, as well as a note recognizing the majesty of the One who has made it possible for God to do two seemingly impossible things: maintain His righteousness; and, tell us sinners that we are righteous.

God, through the propitiation of Jesus Christ can do this. Divine justice enables God to remain absolutely righteous while declaring the sinner in possession of absolute righteousness, who does no more than believe in Jesus. And that is the idea of this phrase, "Who believe in Jesus." It's not simply that He might be just, and that He might be the justifier (the one who declares the sinner just), but you must also recognize that this phrase is saying this to you, who does no more than believe in Jesus? That's all. You're not adding anything to it, and not subtracting. You're just believing in Jesus. It is that simple and that specific.

God has achieved the marvel of mercy meeting truth, and of righteousness and peace kissing one another. That's what the psalmist had in mind, where those factors are brought together in Psalm 85:10, where he says, "Mercy and truth are met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other." God's mercy has been able to maintain the truth. It is not a fiction that God is absolutely righteous. It is not a fiction that to you has been imputed (because you believe in Jesus as Savior) that absolute righteousness. The peace that Jesus gives has actually met and kissed the righteousness that God gives. Absolute righteousness and peace have met. And that's what the human heart seeks.

People outside of the family of God (without Christ) never know peace, and they are in great danger. They face a God of wrath. God's mercy is expressed here while His moral law is perfectly met. He is a just God. Although He forgives the sins of sinners, in the Old Testament past, and the New Testament present, He is still a God who is maintaining His absolute righteousness.

So, in doing no more than believing in Jesus is a statement that just shouts out against the gimmicks, and the substitutions, and the many things that people are told to do today in order to please God; in order to come to His mercy; and, in order to come to His blessing. That is the Everest of Scripture. God says, "I have sent Christ who, through His blood, became the propitiation for the sins of the world. Those who have faith in Him and have received Him as Savior put themselves in a unique relationship to Me.

**Propitiation**

This propitiation declares that God in the past was always righteous in passing over sins. He eventually paid for them. This propitiation declares that He is righteous now. He will deal with people only on a righteous basis. If they ignore Him, they will have His wrath. And thirdly, God's motive was that He didn't want to just maintain His righteousness. He wanted to maintain it on the basis that He could include you and me in His heaven. Now, that is mercy; that is grace; and, that is fantastic.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1977

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

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