

Lessons from Romans **Book 1**

Truth in Sequence

Introducing the Gospel of Christ



For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes; for the Jew first, and also for the Greek.

Romans 1:16 WEB



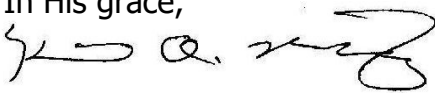
Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Foreword

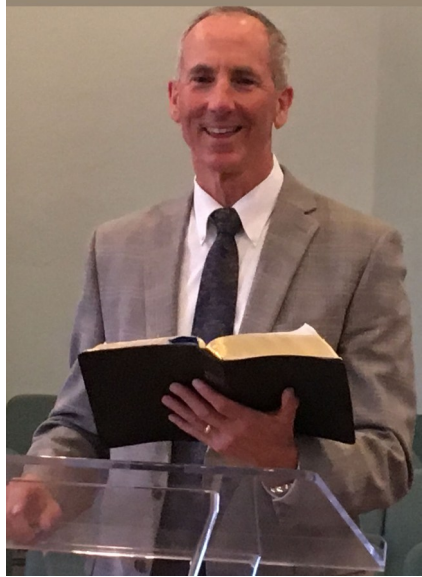
Writing down in publication form some of the tremendous truths we have learned from the Book of Romans has been on my mind for a long time. In fact, I am so eager I am writing this while sitting in the Sky Harbor airport waiting for an out-of-town flight to begin a short writing sabbatical.

What we have learned has blessed me greatly, and I trust I will be able to recapture some of that in the publications to follow. If I stick with the living and abiding Word of God, I know that it will not return void but will accomplish that which is pleasing in God's sight.

In His grace,



Kevin Redig



All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1982 edition).

Vistoso Community Church
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Introduction

It is fair to say that I get excited about whatever portion of God's Word I happen to be teaching. There is something about the extra understanding and insights that the Holy Spirit reveals during the process of preparing to teach others that can't help but generate an internal enthusiasm to simply preach the Word and let it impact those willing to listen.

The Book of Romans is Special

Despite the fact that this is my happy condition no matter what book of the Bible I happen to be teaching, there is something different about the Book of Romans. Not only does it cover an immense scope of doctrine from start to finish, it also provides depth on certain aspects of the Christian Life that are found nowhere else.

I will never budge from the conviction that *All Scripture is God-breathed*—every last bit of it. Nonetheless, I invite you to join me on a marvelous voyage of discovery through the Book of Romans. We need all of the Bible in order to grow in grace and knowledge, but we cannot go wrong by devoting significant time and effort to the Book of Romans. I trust the Lord will bless us for doing so.

Our Approach Is Different

Perhaps you have heard of the *Romans Road*? It is a method of sharing the Gospel that makes use of a collection of verses found within the Book of Romans. I want to do something a little bit different. Of course, the best way to study any portion of Scripture is to go line-by-line and verse-by-verse, applying a method of interpreting the text that is similar to how we might approach any other important document. We interpret the text using the normal and customary usage of the words employed,

taking into account the historical setting, grammar, context, and the use of rhetoric. We have done just that in our study of the Book of Romans, and now, for the purpose of these publications, I would like to emphasize some of the key truths we have uncovered.



I am thinking of it as going on a *voyage of discovery* through the Book of Romans, as if we were exploring a beautiful coastline, transiting from one safe harbor to another. In our case, however, we will be traveling from one aspect of the Gospel of God's grace to another. When I use the term *Gospel*, I am using it, as Paul does in the Book of Romans, as a reference to every aspect of the so-great salvation available in Jesus Christ—from our justification all the way to our glorification.

It is my hope that by the time we are finished, you will be able to trace your way through the Book of Romans through a collection of truths that will not only regularly draw you back into the text, but will also promote your confidence in your justified standing before the Lord, provide the means of living a sanctified life, and guide you into fulfilling your calling within the Body of Christ.

So, let's go directly to the first of the truths we will discover—our first port-of-call—which is found in Romans Chapter 1.

I. The Gospel of Christ

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

Romans 1:16-17

By the time Paul has arrived at Verse 16 of Chapter 1, he is ready to firmly declare something to us: He is not the least bit ashamed of the *Gospel of Christ*! He is always ready to bring it into conversation and he is not the least bit hesitant to turn every discussion to the topic of Christ. In fact, even towards the end of his life, with only hardship ahead, he makes clear what is uppermost in his mind:

"However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the Gospel of God's grace."

Acts 20:24

I think we should take note of his focus for two reasons. First, you can always tell what is most important to a person by what they love to talk about: their favorite sports team, the stock market, and so on. How about choosing Jesus and the salvation that can be found in Him, rather than politics, sports, or the market?

Second, can you imagine a church full of people who are *not ashamed*? If each one of us is *not ashamed*, then we would be a church fellowship that was *not ashamed*. Wouldn't that be a wonderful signifying characteristic by which to be known by the communities which surround us? Of course this raises the question, "What is the Gospel of Christ?" We will begin our investigation now, but it will take the first eight chapters of Romans to develop our understanding to an acceptable degree!

An Introduction to the Gospel of Christ?

There is much we need to understand about the Gospel of Christ as background for our study of the Book of Romans.

First, the Meaning of Gospel

The Greek word translated gospel simply means *good news* of any kind. It is not until it becomes the *Gospel of Christ* that we have good news centered in a person—the Lord Jesus Christ. This is crucial, for when the message starts to drift away from the person and work of Christ, it ceases to be the kind of news that has the power to save!

Second, The Gospel of Christ

The closest thing we have to a Biblical definition of the Gospel is found in I Corinthians 15. Let me suggest that it is the *work* that leads to *good news* for you and me.

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the Gospel I preached to you which you also received ... For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared ...

I Corinthians 15:1-4

Now you know why Romans calls the message the *Gospel of Christ*! For, who is dying for sins, being raised from the dead, and then appearing to many? Why, Jesus is! What do you see the rest of mankind contributing? Absolutely nothing! With that being the case, it is no wonder that Acts 4:12 is so dogmatic:

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

Acts 4:12

Let me pause to make a *point of application*: You and I need to learn to guard the Gospel. We do that by listening carefully to ourselves when we explain to another how he or she can be saved unto eternal life. If the message focuses on anything other than the person and work of Christ, we have turned from a message of good news to something else altogether!



Likewise, we need to be equally on guard with respect to the Gospel message that we allow into our families, church, and circles of influence. A watered-down or an erroneous Gospel is often worse than no Gospel at all, for it can fool people into thinking they have been reconciled to God when they have not!

The Really Good News

What makes Christ's crucifixion for our sins and resurrection from the dead such good news? Consider this an introduction, for there is much more to come during our study in the Book of Romans:

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life. John 3:14-15

The *lifting* of the Son of Man is a reference to Jesus' crucifixion, and that's our connection to the I Corinthians 15 definition. With our sins dealt with at the cross, God is able to give eternal life to all who believe. That is not the end of the good news. It's just the start!

But now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed ... even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

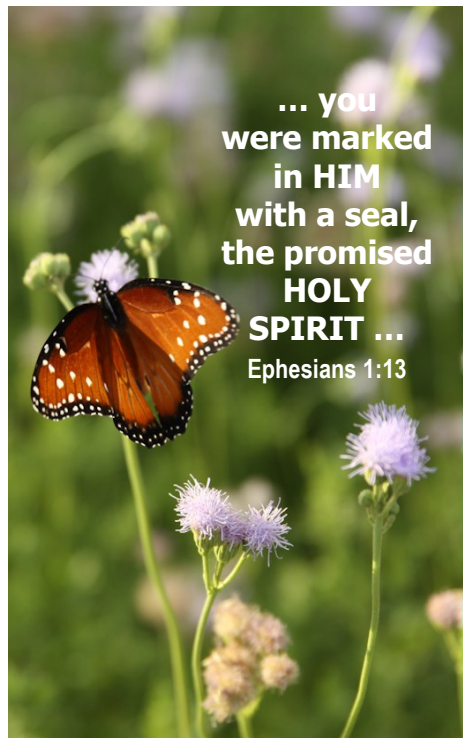
Roman 3:21-22

Notice that for the second time the only involvement of lost mankind is a response of faith. Our faith response to the finished work of Christ at the cross leads to the receipt of both eternal life and the very righteousness of God. The combination of these two things is very good news for each and every lost person who, apart from Christ, is otherwise *dead in trespasses and sin* and unrighteous in contrast to a holy God.

To give you one more of the many things that are the result of faith in Christ, consider this passage:

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit ...

Ephesians 1:13



How was it that we came to be *included in Christ*, and how can lost persons be blessed in the same way? First, they need to hear the truth of the Gospel, and then they need to believe it— put their faith in it—for all who do so, theirs is to receive eternal life, the righteousness of Christ, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit. That's really good news, and this is just the tip of the iceberg!

Through Faith Alone

I am sure you have noticed, I have put the emphasis on the work that God has done, with faith as the only response necessary on the part of man. In fact, I would go so far as to say, when we are dealing with a lost person, unless we are putting the emphasis on belief in the person and work of Christ as the sole sufficiency for salvation from hell to heaven, then we are sharing something other than the Gospel of Christ and working at cross purposes with God. How can I make such a strong statement? Upon the authority of God's Word! Consider first our current passage of interest:

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes ...

Romans 1:16

Who can be saved? Everyone! How do they receive the salvation found in the Gospel of Christ? Could it be any clearer? It comes through faith in the Gospel message. Let's add another clarifying passage:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

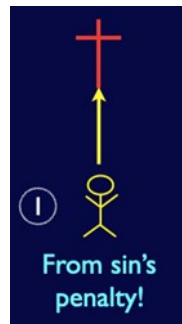
Our salvation is a gift from God; ours is but to receive it by faith. Naturally, if it is a gift, there are no works on our part. Furthermore, now we see why!

If we could gain our salvation through works, it wouldn't be long before we were boasting about what we had done in order to earn our salvation. In fact, I have heard a few testimonies exactly like that. In our day, these types of testimonies tend to revolve around a perceived level of commitment or surrender! But what does the text of Ephesians say? No boasting! Who is going to get the *credit* for our salvation? Why, God and Him alone! For He has done all the work necessary to save—ours is but to receive this priceless gift by faith alone in Christ alone! That's what makes it the grace of God!

Consider the Scope

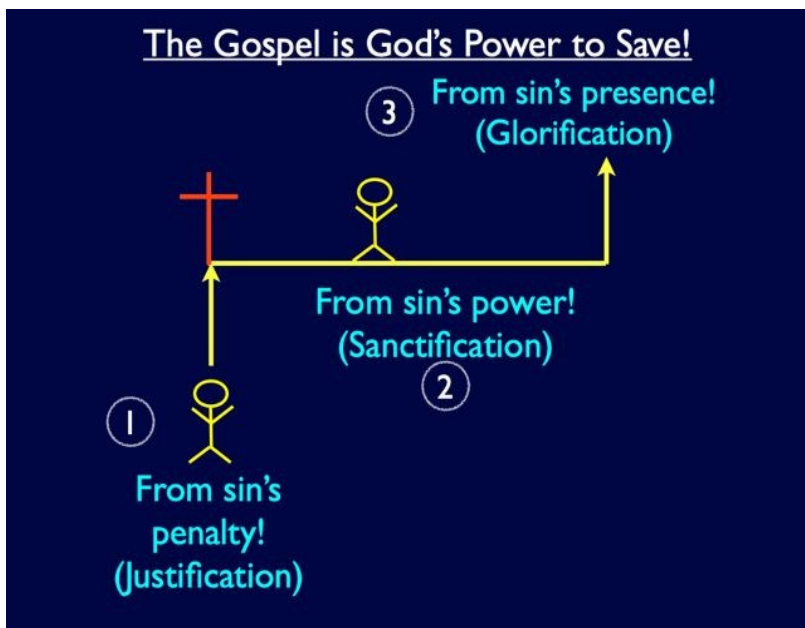
I have alluded to something that I now want to make plain—the Gospel of Christ is much broader in scope than we often realize. Let me show you.

Thus far, we have been talking about what God has done to save us from sin's penalty. The wages of sin is death, and the Lord Jesus Christ paid that penalty for us so that we wouldn't have to. This penalty must be paid if we are to change our destiny from one of eternal separation from God to one in God's heaven.



Now I have a question for you: Has God saved us from the penalty of sin and then, in essence, said, "*Good luck, you are on your own from here on out?*" The answer to that is a resounding "No!" The Gospel of Christ covers so much more.

As a lost sinner, I was very much attracted to God's provision for cleansing me from my sin. But now I find the fullness of the salvation provided in Jesus Christ to be even more compelling. In the fullness of the Gospel of Christ, we find salvation from sin's penalty, salvation



from sin's power, and one day salvation from sin's very presence. That's the Gospel of Christ as unfolded in the Book of Romans and supported by the New Testament epistles. Allow me to prove it to you. In Romans 6:14 we see deliverance from the power of sin: *For sin shall not be your master because you are not under law, but under grace.*

Then note the promise of Romans 8:23-24 (ESV) where our deliverance from this body of corruption is in view:

... but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

We are going to study all three aspects of our salvation in much greater detail as part of our study of the Book of Romans. But, even at this early stage, I wanted you to see the immensity of the *Good News* available in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Available to All

Let's introduce another aspect of the Gospel: to whom is it available? That, too, is addressed in our reference passage:

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Romans 1:16-17

The word translated *Greek* can refer to a particular ethnicity, but it is also used to refer to a non-Jewish person as well as someone who is apart from the practice of Judaism. In short, Jew or Greek is a way to differentiate between someone who is Jewish and someone who is not; someone who practices Judaism and someone who does not. The message of this verse, then, is that everyone can be saved through faith in the *Good News*. No wonder Paul is not ashamed to proclaim it!

Since there are those who teach that God chooses a few to be saved while excluding any possibility for the majority, let me reinforce the actual teaching of Scripture with two more passages:

... He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

II Peter 3:9

This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

I Timothy 2:3-4

Let's put this all together: The Gospel is for everyone, God wants all to come to salvation. Nothing would please Him more than for every human being made in His image and likeness to come to know the truth of the Gospel and believe it, thereby, being saved from an eternal destiny in hell and delivered to one in His heaven!

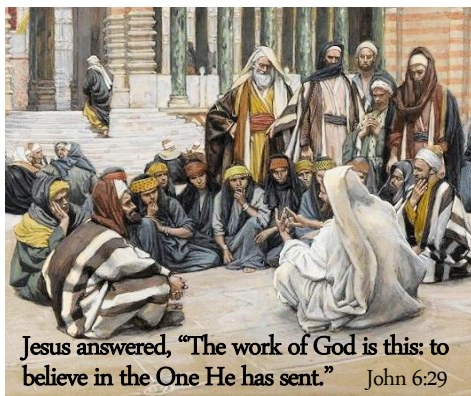
Salvation Requires a Response

This raises the question: If God wishes it, why are not all saved? The answer is that it comes down to each individual's response to the Gospel of Christ!

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.

John 3:36

You see, God has provided a salvation abundantly able to cover every single human being. But, in His sovereignty, He has done so in a way that will satisfy His nature, particularly His righteousness and justice. This means man cannot come in a way of his own choosing, he can only come through the Gospel of Christ.



This is a difficult proposition for lost mankind to accept. On the one hand, we have the wonderful Gospel of Christ that has the power to save anyone who will believe. On the other hand, we have sinful, rebellious mankind who does not want to acknowledge that he is a sinner in need of a Savior. Then, when man does admit his need, he is prone to try to save himself by means of religious practice—something for which he can claim credit rather than by acknowledging his complete dependence upon God's provision of salvation through faith alone in the sufficiency of Christ alone. We are helpless and must come to God totally dependent upon His grace for our salvation. In our rebellion we find that offensive!

Understanding Righteousness

As we continue to Romans 1:17, we keep right on adding to our understanding of the Gospel. We turn now toward what is going to become the essential concept of righteousness!

For in it [the Gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed ...

Roman 1:17

The Greek word translated righteousness is *dikaiosune*. I mention this because we are going to have to spend a moment to grasp a difficult concept. This word is typically translated by some form of the word for righteousness or justice. For example, in the KJV, it is translated 41 times as righteousness and 33 as justice.

You should recognize a problem at this point. In the English language, righteousness and justice do not mean the same thing. The issue is this: This complex Greek word cannot be reduced to either idea. Instead, *dikaiosune* should be understood to be something like that which goes on in the mind of a judge who weighs the righteousness of one's behavior and then pronounces judgment. If the accused's behavior is found in violation of the law, then a sentence of condemnation will be pronounced. If the accused is found to be innocent before the law, then the individual will be found righteous (justified) in a legal sense.

Here is the essential part: The Gospel reveals that which is righteous to God in a legal sense. Let me show you how the Scriptures lay out man's legal predicament and how the Gospel of Christ addresses it:

- Fallen man is unrighteous in God's sight due to sin, and thus has a terrible problem—death is coming.

... There is no one righteous, not even one;

Romans 3:10

**For the wages of sin
is death ...**

Romans 6:23

The above is a reference to spiritual death, which if not remedied means that man will spend all eternity separated from God.

- At the cross, God took our sin—that which had resulted in a sentence of death—and imputed it to Christ.

**God made Him who
had no sin to be sin
for us ...**

II Corinthians 5:21

Then God judged that sin by pouring out His wrath upon it! That meant Jesus received in Himself that which we rightly deserved!

**We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us
has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on
Him the iniquity of us all.**

Isaiah 53:6

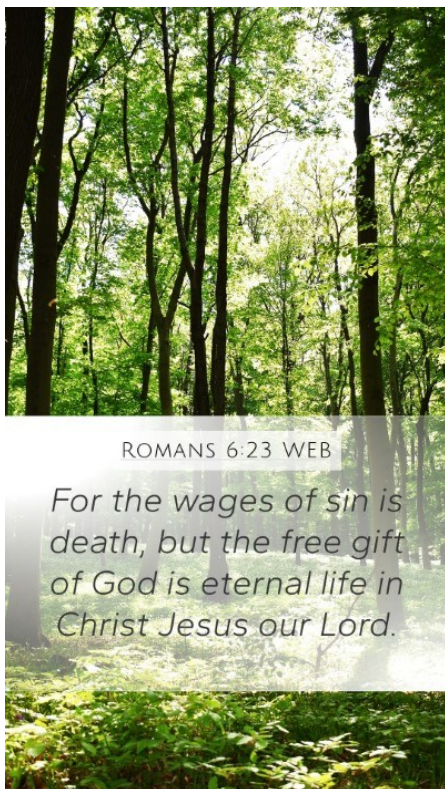
**He was pierced for our transgressions, He was
crushed for our iniquities ...**

Isaiah 53:5

- When we believe in the person and work of Christ, what He accomplished on the cross is applied to each of us individually and forgiveness of sin is the result!

**Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through
His name everyone who believes in Him receives
forgiveness of sins.**

Acts 10:43



ROMANS 6:23 WEB

*For the wages of sin is
death, but the free gift
of God is eternal life in
Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Further, our sins have been exchanged for His righteousness. Here is the rest of II Corinthians 5:21:

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.
II Corinthians 5:21

Is it at all possible that we could have God's righteousness?

... even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

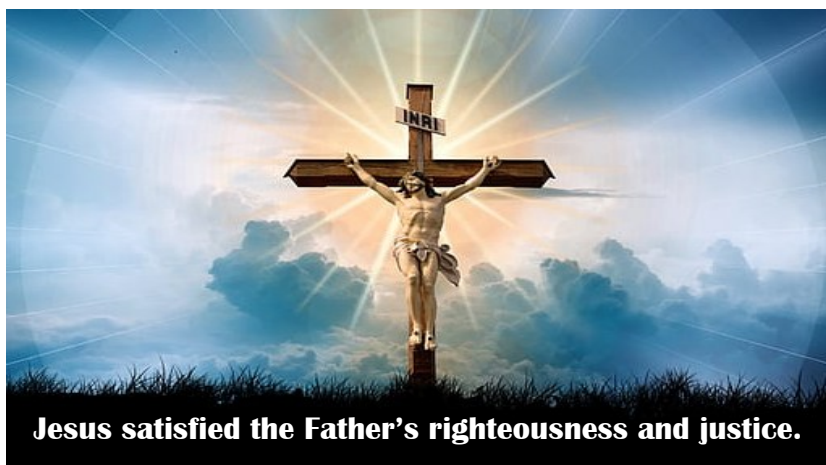
Romans 3:22

That's why this is called the Gospel of Christ, and that is why it is very, very good news!

- How does God the Father view the work of Christ?

... He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in service to God, and that He might make propitiation for the sins of the people.
Hebrews 2:17

Hebrews 2:17 tells us that Jesus, as our priestly representative before God, made propitiation for the sins of the people. Propitiation is a theological term which means to be satisfied. The work of Jesus satisfied the



Father. We need look no further for proof of the Father's satisfaction than the fact that He raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in the place of highest honor in the entire universe. Why the great honor? Jesus completely fulfilled the will of the Father and, because of the sufficiency of His work on the cross, He saved us and satisfied the Father's righteousness and justice.

- Is the love of God by itself enough to save? No! You might be surprised at that answer, but any one aspect of God's character has to work in concert with all aspects of His character. His love sent Jesus to this earth at the First Advent, but His justice required the payment for sin to be accomplished. So, Jesus died in our place! With justice served, God's righteousness was satisfied which opened the way for lost mankind to be reconciled to God by receiving His gift of salvation.

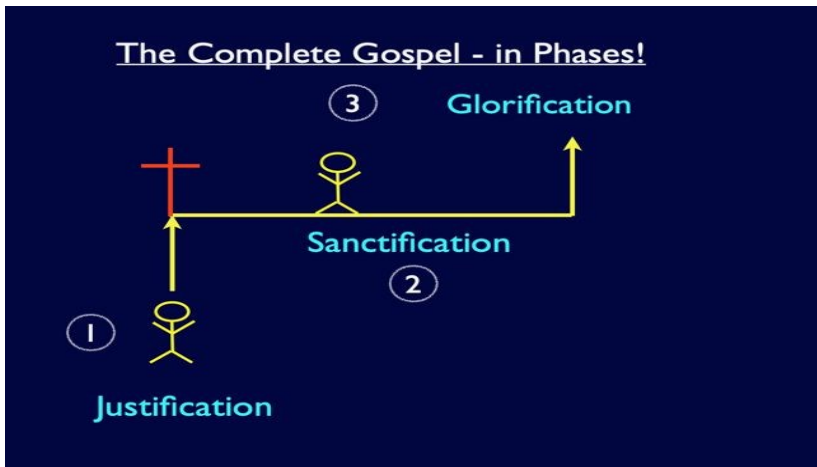
Where is lost man in accomplishing all of this? No-where to be seen! There is no room whatsoever to talk about what we *bring to the table* in terms of our salvation. We were under a sentence of death, and there was no hope for any of us apart from the Gospel of Christ, which has put on display the very righteousness of God!

Understanding the Scope of Our Salvation

One final point of introduction for the Gospel as we look once more at Verses 16-17 in their entirety. Notice the very last portion highlighted in red.

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:16-17

We are in for a surprise as we come to the close of this passage. We tend to think of the Gospel as a message that provides an entry point to the Christian Life and results in the receipt of eternal life. While that is true, the Book of Romans is going to surprise us. For the Gospel of Christ as developed in the Book of Romans not only provides entry into God's plan of salvation, but covers every aspect of salvation all the way to glory. Do you see how clearly this idea is introduced in the last phrase of Verse 17? For the Gospel that is revealed in Romans is by faith from its beginning to its end. So naturally, those who have been justified before God are to live by faith every step of the way.



Based upon the description of the Gospel right here in Verses 16-17, let me make a prediction: The Book of Romans is going to describe how we can change our eternal destiny from one in hell to one in heaven; how we can overcome the lust of the sin nature; the new life and enabling power we have in Christ; and our future glory with Him. At each and every step of the way, ours is to receive by faith the fullness of salvation provided, in

grace, by our loving Savior! Of course, since I have read ahead, my prediction is on very solid ground. Let me show you this by making use of the diagram on the previous page that breaks our salvation down into three components. First, our eternal destiny is changed from one in hell to one in heaven as the result of being saved from sin's penalty—and that is a part of the Gospel of Christ as spelled out in Romans:

Blessed is the man whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Romans 4:7

Second, our Salvation doesn't stop there. Romans speaks also of the breaking of sin's power that we might be saved from carnality to spirituality:

For sin shall not be your master, for you are not under law, but under grace. Romans 6:14

Finally, Romans speaks of our future glorification as we are one day delivered from sin's very presence, that is the sin nature within:

... but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. Romans 8:23

I trust you can see that for most of us our understanding of the Gospel has been too small! Instead, we need to align with the Scriptural depiction of the Gospel as:

Good News of God's power to deliver a life from a destiny in the Lake of Fire to one in His presence; it is God's power to daily deliver a life from the ever present desires of the flesh; and it is the power to deliver a life from the failings of this mortal body! We receive what God freely offers—by faith—at every step of the way. This is not a story about us, but about God's "Good News" to needy mankind!

So, not only is this our first *port-of-call* in our voyage through the Book of Romans, it also provides an overview of the rich content that is to come.

Even at this early point in our study, let me ask: What is your relationship to Jesus Christ? Have you put your faith in Him, and Him alone, as the means by which you can receive not just eternal life but the fullness of all that God has done on your behalf? If so, praise God! If not, I trust I have whetted your appetite for the fullness of the Gospel that we are going to unfold as we pursue our study of the Book of Romans.

II. None Righteous—Not One!

As we continue our *voyage of discovery*, we arrive at a second truth of which we must take note:

There is none righteous, no, not one ... Romans 3:10

There are roughly eight billion people on the planet, and not a single one can claim to be righteous in and of himself or herself before the Holy One! Read Romans 3:10-18 in its entirety. There you will see man's shortcomings before our perfect God documented over and over.



In fact, this entire section of Scripture is introduced by this summation:

We have already made the charge that Jew and Gentile alike are all under sin. Romans 3:9

Perhaps you are thinking, "How can this be?" Let's allow the Scriptures to answer your question.

Man's Lack of Righteousness

As we have seen, upon the authority of God's Word, no human being can claim a righteous standing before our holy God. It couldn't be stated any more clearly or succinctly than in Romans 3:10:

There is none righteous, no, not one ...

Understand the Reason

Let's firm up this astonishing claim by considering why none can be righteous, starting with:

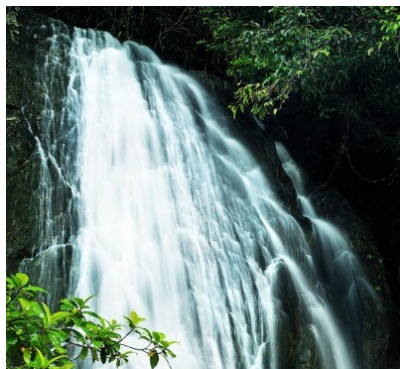
... for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God ... Romans 3:23

If all have sinned, then, of course, they have fallen short of the One who has never sinned and knows no sin! But, be careful at this point. This is not something you have done, it is something you are by virtue of entering the human race. As the Scriptures make clear, Adam's sin has been imputed to every one of us.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned ... Romans 5:12

In truth, things are worse still. In addition to having Adam's imputed sin, mankind is born with a nature to sin!

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. Romans 7:18



ROMANS 3:10 WEB

As it is written,
"There is no one
righteous. No, not
one."



If we combine the above scriptures, we have a more accurate picture of fallen mankind that goes something like this: We are born with Adam's sin imputed to us, as well as an internal nature to sin—and this is true of even the cutest newborn. Thus, it shouldn't be the least bit surprising that as the helpless newborn grows and develops, acts of sin will eventually manifest themselves—for all have sinned and fallen short of God's perfect righteousness. It is not a matter of environment as some have

falsely claimed. It is a matter of our fallen condition. No wonder there is none righteous—not even one!

This is Not Man's View

Before proceeding further, I had better make it clear to you that lost mankind does not share the Biblical view of himself. It is easy to find the philosopher in every age waxing eloquently about the noble nature of man:

Man is born with a potential for goodness, an innate compassion for others. It is civilization that has prompted the outworking of evil. In his natural, solitary state—man is a noble savage. Rous-
seau

In our day this same position sounds like: If we would just address climate change, income inequality, and social justice, then the human condition would improve

mightily. I wonder what Abel and Noah would have to say about such claims. I have heard this quip repeated by a number of sources:

Nothing is more vehemently denied, and empirically verifiable, than the depravity of man.

Do you catch the startling accuracy of this statement: we resist the truth of Romans 3:10, though there is overwhelming evidence of it everywhere. But, once we understand man as accurately described in God's Word, it should be a simple matter to predict man's denial or covering up the reality that:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:9

The Consequences

What are the ramifications of the truth that there is none righteous before our holy God? Consider the following:

Like the rest, we were by nature, objects of God's wrath. ... Ephesians 2:3

... we were God's enemies ... Romans 5:10

"... broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ..." Matthew 7:13

Our lack of righteousness before God has terrible consequences: The human race comes into this world under a status of being an object of God's wrath and labeled as His enemy. The way is broad because it must be so to handle the human race. If something doesn't change before our time on this earth comes to an end, eternal damnation will be our final destination!

What a terrible, terrible condition all fallen mankind shares—regardless of wealth, status, or anything else by which we define and separate ourselves!

God is More Than Love

But how can this be? Doesn't God love the world— isn't that enough? He is love, but that is not all He is! There is more to His nature than a single attribute. For example, God is holy!

God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all.

I John 1:5

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory." At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.

Isaiah 6:3-4

God's holiness is a kind of perfection in which man has no share. When Isaiah saw God in His holiness as described in Isaiah 6, his immediate response was:

"Woe to me ... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips ..."

Isaiah 6:5

In order to reconcile Isaiah to Himself, God provided the means to take away his sin and atone for his guilt! Note that Isaiah was perhaps the most godly man in all of Israel at the time, and still God had to address his lack of holiness.

Then, among other things, God's holiness includes His attributes of perfect righteousness and justice. With the corruption to which we have become accustomed, these attributes have become somewhat foreign to us, but they are an essential part of who God is. For example, the Psalmist declares:

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; love and faithfulness go before You.

Psalms 89:14

I include this passage so we understand that the very foundation of God's moral authority is His perfect

righteousness and justice. Further, they should be seen by us as always working in perfect communion with each other: Righteousness is the standard and justice acts in accordance with whether or not one has met the righteousness standard. God's standard is so high and pure, it can be said to reach to the heavens!

**Your righteousness,
O God, reaches to the
heavens.** Psalm 71:19

On the other hand, man's righteousness, in contrast to God's, will always fall short!



My righteousness is as filthy rags before the Lord.
Isaiah 64:6

What then must the justice of God do? It must condemn all that falls short of His righteousness because His attributes of righteousness and justice undergird all that He is. They are the source from which His love and faithfulness act. Now you see why fallen mankind is said to be *an object of God's wrath* and His *enemy*!

First, the Bad News

No wonder the Scriptures repeatedly paint such a dour and bleak future for mankind. Every one of us is someday going to come before an infinitely holy God:

**... man is destined to die once, and after that to face
judgment ...** Hebrews 9:27

Once we understand that no one will ever be declared righteous in His sight, then all that can be left is a fearful expectation of condemnation!

Would it ever be possible for an individual who is unrighteous to do something in order to gain personal righteousness in such a way as to be accepted by God? How could it? How could unrighteousness act in such a way as to gain a righteous standing?

It would seem that, unless a Savior steps forward and acts on our behalf, we are all helpless, without hope, and hell-bound! Further, that Savior would have to be one that has a righteous standing in His own right and would, therefore, be acceptable to our heavenly Father.

Then, the Good News

Perhaps you are thinking, "This is terrible, depressing news and I don't want to hear it any more! Why are you trying to put me down?" My response follows the Biblical pattern. It is important for us to understand the *bad news* of our condemnation so that the Good News of the Gospel of Christ can take on its proper appeal!

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing ...

I Corinthians 1:18

That is, we need to understand the ramifications of the truth that there is none righteous, no, not even one, and that our future consists solely of judgment followed by condemnation.

For Christ died for our sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.

I Peter 3:18

There is hope after all, and it is found in the Righteous One—the Lord Jesus Christ. He acted on our behalf! He died on Calvary's cross to pay the wages of sin, which is death, so that we wouldn't have to suffer condemnation

for eternity. Once we understand the way things are, this is the furthest thing from foolishness. For it is the greatest *Good News* mankind will ever hear!

More than *Jesus Loves You*

Because it has become so common, let me address a gospel which consists solely of *Jesus loves you!* Of course, Jesus does love each and every one of us, but there are those who teach that this is all we need—forget about Calvary's cross and the issue of sin. To believe in this message is to believe in a

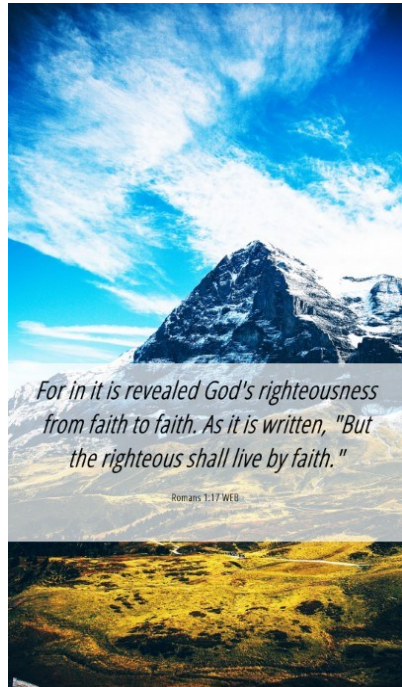
one-dimensional Savior, which is not to believe in the Son of God at all. As we recall each time we celebrate Communion, it is the *Blood of Christ* that provides for remission of sin. There is no addressing our lack of righteousness apart from the death of Christ for sin:

God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

II Corinthians 5:21

This verse takes us forward and reveals God's solution to our unrighteousness! Jesus took upon Himself that which made us unrighteous (our sin), so that we might become something acceptable before a holy God—righteous!

This is accomplished only by receiving His righteousness in exchange for our sin.



All Are Unrighteous!

Perhaps you are thinking that you are really not that bad, especially as you look around and compare yourself to others. That is the purpose of the material between the introduction of the Gospel in Romans 1:16-17, and the dogmatic assertion that there are none righteous of Romans 3:10. This section of scripture makes it absolutely clear that every member of the human race desperately needs the *Good News* of the *Gospel of Christ!* This includes three categories: The immoral man, the moral man, and the religious man.

Romans first addresses the *immoral man*:

For this reason God gave them over to vile passions ... God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting ... Romans 1:26,28

It is no surprise that the *immoral man* is unacceptable to God, but what about the *moral man*:

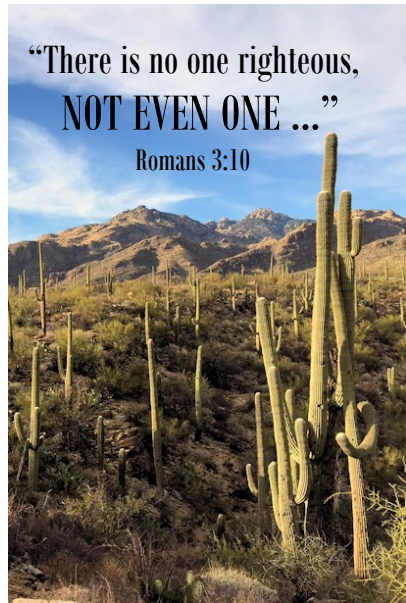
And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? Romans 2:3

Then, the most surprising to some is that even the religious man is in desperate straits:

Indeed, you are called a Jew, rest on the Law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and approve those things that are excellent ... confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind ... You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. Romans 2:17-24

One of the most difficult things for many to come to grips with is the hopeless nature of their condition before

a holy God, and how desperately they need the good news contained in the Gospel of Christ. It is as if man is somehow blinded to his true spiritual condition and doesn't realize the extent of his lostness! Many of the people you and I rub shoulders with every day act as if they do not need *the Gospel*/when, in reality, everyone needs it! For, there is *none righteous, no, not one!* Perhaps my own testimony will help some who are struggling with this very issue.



I grew up in the best home in America! I was raised in an upper middle class home; my Mom was the world's best cook and a stay-at-home Mom who applied her teaching credentials to nurturing our education every single day. We lived by the golden rule. Making the most of our talents was the extent of what I knew from the Bible, and I was a pretty darn good religious kid. (This testimony isn't going to raise money or impress anyone, is it?)

I was 20 years old when I heard the Gospel for the first time, and I was challenged to place my faith in the person and work of Jesus in order to receive eternal life. I was deeply challenged by this message—for I knew all about Jesus, but, as was made clear by the college classmate who witnessed to me, I didn't know Him personally as Savior! My first response was, "I don't need what you have ... I'm

doing okay.” Except—I wasn’t! I knew something wasn’t quite right, so I doubled down on the works of religion in order to live a God-pleasing life—and things got worse. They got worse because I was dead in Adam, with a nature to sin that I had to try to constantly suppress, and often failed to do so.

I suppose on the scale of things, my issues were pretty minor—I was a good kid from the burbs, not a kid from the other side of the tracks with all kinds of baggage. Nonetheless, the Holy Spirit had convicted me of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and I knew I would never be able to stand before the scrutiny of the holy God of the Bible. I was better than most, but unrighteous before the only One who really mattered, and judgment was coming!

My struggles don’t tell a story like that of the saved alcoholic or drug addict, but the outcome was really the same. My condition was just as desperate for I was one of the unrighteous. I needed a Savior.

I knew that Christ was that Savior, but still I hesitated until the day I fully realized the hopelessness of my condition and my desperate need. Then, I turned to the only One who could save, and put my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ Who died for my sins and gave me His life!

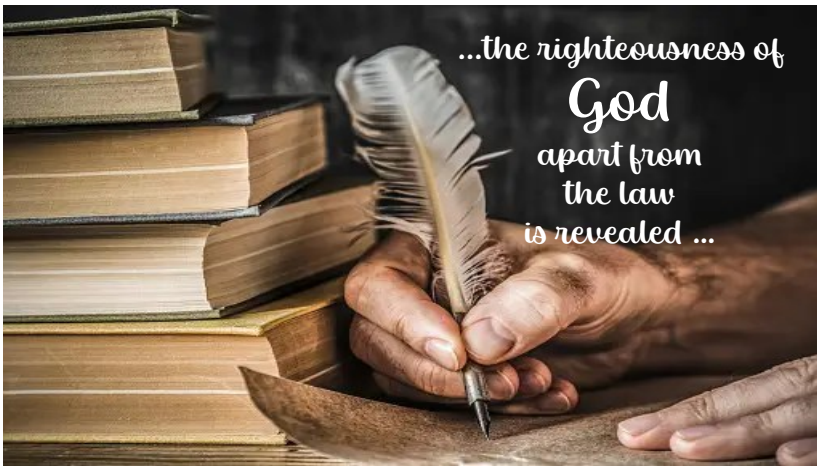
Likewise, if you are trusting in anything other than the person and work of Jesus Christ to save, then you don’t really see yourself as you are. I trust this booklet will have helped to open your eyes. I implore you to sweep aside those things that are impotent to save. Instead, I urge you to put your trust in the one and only thing that can save—the Good News centered in Jesus Christ, faith alone in Christ alone!

III. But Now— the Righteousness of God!

If Romans truly is unfolding the Gospel of Christ that alone has the power to save, then it must have the answer to the terrible predicament of man being unrighteous and one day coming before a holy God. And, it does! None of us would ever have come up with the solution that God has provided. Once again, it is an awesome testimony to His grace. The next step in our voyage of discovery is just a few verses away in Romans 3:21-22.

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed ...

Romans 3:21



Note three things:

1. This is not man's righteousness, but God's—and that means it's perfect.
2. This righteousness is apart from Law—that means it is not obtained by any kind of works, or even obedience, on the part of man!

3. Lastly, it is now revealed—right here—in the message from God that we call *the Gospel of Christ*. This revelation is more fully developed as we continue—stand back in amazement for Verse 22!

... even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe.

Romans 3:22

Have you grasped what God has provided? Not a single one of us will ever have an adequate righteousness in His sight, and so this otherwise unsolvable need is met by God giving us His righteousness. That would certainly solve our problem, but what great deed, sacrifice, or cost must we provide in order to obtain His righteousness? There is no deed, sacrifice, or cost—just faith in Christ. In case we couldn't quite comprehend it the first time, He said it again *to all and on all who believe*. This is grace beyond compare!



To reinforce the beauty of what God has done, let me run through a few questions:

- Is this an earned, merited, or deserved righteousness? Not in the least! It comes by faith alone in Christ alone.
- Is this a demonstrated righteousness? In other words, is this passage only true when we act righteously following faith? No—it is ours at the point of a faith that justifies and saves for all eternity!

- Is this an imputed (legal) righteousness, that will allow us to survive an encounter with a thrice-holy God? Yes! That is exactly what it is. It is not dependent upon our behavior, but rather our God-given standing! To see this, look at the next two verses of Romans 3:

... there is no difference; for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, being justified by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ...

Romans 3:22-24

No surprises about falling short, for we know that none are righteous. But God's answer is to provide *justification*—a theological concept that includes a righteous standing before God. How do we reach such a point? We reach it by receiving the righteousness of Christ through faith. Do you see the works of man anywhere in these verses? Works are nowhere to be seen because they have no place in the *Gospel of Christ*. The good news from God to man is about what Christ has done, not what we might think we are able to contribute.

So let's organize what we have learned, and add to it from related Scripture.

Justified Before a Holy God!

If you have the very righteousness of God *to you and on you*, then you are good and truly righteous! Most significantly, His righteousness will allow you to stand justified in His presence.

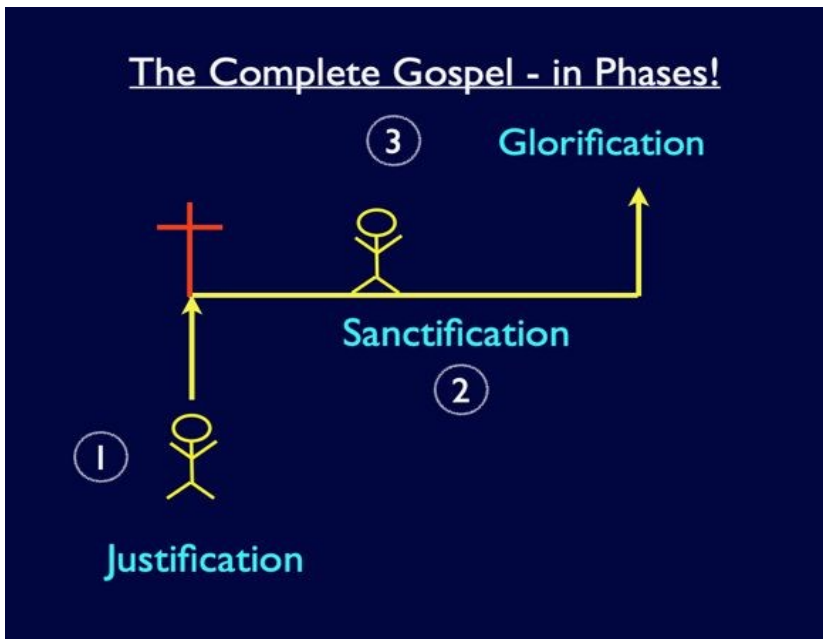
Our Justification is Permanent

When we place our faith in the person and work of Christ, we have this righteousness for the first time in our lives. What's more—it is permanently ours! It can't be emphasized too strongly—this is God's righteousness imputed to the one who believes. This concept is going

to be reinforced for the next several chapters in the Book of Romans so that it is absolutely clear.

The righteousness we receive by faith is a legal or forensic righteousness. It is permanent and gives us an unassailable standing before our holy God. Naturally, however, it will not yet have fully found its way into our behavior. That is why we must follow the leading of the Holy Spirit toward sanctification in the second phase of our Salvation, as illustrated in the graphic below.

This concept is often not well understood by Christians. For example, when we fail to live uprightly, we begin to question the security of our salvation. Some even teach that if you are not living consistently with the perfect righteousness that is yours in Christ, then you are not really saved. That is like saying, "*If you are not the model husband, then you are not really married!*" Your marriage license declares otherwise, as does Romans 3:22 regarding the believer in Christ.



Our Justification Makes Us Acceptable to God

If we have God's imputed righteousness, we are declared by Scripture to be justified—acceptable in His sight:

God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in His blood ... so as to be just and the One who justifies those who have faith in Jesus.

Romans 3:25-26

Notice once again the emphasis on faith and its synonym belief. Notice also, as illustrated in the graphic, that this is the first component of our salvation and coincides with the removal of our sin and receipt of eternal life!

Our Justification Does Not Depend Upon Our Behavior

This is the part that is hard for many to grasp: Justification speaks of our standing and not our actual experience. By that I mean that our justification does not depend upon our behavior. To see an example of what is possible, although very undesirable, consider the following:

But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and that is our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. I Corinthians 1:30

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal ... I Corinthians 3:1

Because the believers in the church in Corinth are in Christ Jesus, they are righteous (and sanctified and redeemed). However, at the same time, they are carnal, which means they were mired in unrighteous behavior! If the imputed righteousness received at the time of our salvation was something that could be lost, then the Corinthians would certainly have lost it! But it can't be lost via failure or a lack of faithfulness on our part, as

I Corinthians 1:30 makes clear. This is not in any way to excuse carnality, for Paul's whole purpose in writing the Book of Corinthians was to remedy this woeful situation in the church in Corinth.

Let me show you what should happen. As those who are justified, this should be our new status:

And having been set free from sin, you have become slaves to righteousness. Romans 6:18

Our Justification Does Not Make Sanctification Automatic

As you can imagine, becoming a slave to righteousness is something that is not going to be automatic. Rather it is going to take time and spiritual growth. I love the way Proverbs 4:18 pictures it for us:

The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. Proverbs 4:18

We are righteous and placed in the path of the righteous by virtue of having placed our faith in the person and work of Christ.

And, like the sun rising that grows ever brighter toward noonday, we too are to become even more conformed to the image and likeness of our Savior. All of this and more is yet to come in our study of Romans! For, if this is the desired outcome, we have yet to cover God's provision as to means.



In Closing, Some Application

Let me give you a point of application, and then some Scriptural support for what is often a very difficult and discouraging situation.

First, the point of application:

Let's hypothetically speak of a grandchild who seemed to have a good testimony of having placed his or her faith in the person and work of Christ and showed evidence of spiritual growth. Now, after the college years, the grandchild shows little interest or perhaps has even renounced the faith once held dear.

Unfortunately, the above is not hypothetical, but is all too real for many who have shared something very similar with me. Of course it prompts questions: Were these grandchildren ever saved or have they lost their salvation? The answers hinge on one issue: Had they ever trusted Christ for eternal life? If they believed, then they received:

... even the righteousness of God through faith in Christ to all and on all who believe. ... Romans 3:22

It is possible for a child of God to be walking around on a college campus right now with God's imputed righteousness, and at the same time be walking anything but uprightly before the Lord? Is this desirable? No! Is it okay? Absolutely not! But unfortunately, it is all too possible! I know there is resistance to this, but let me ask, *"Has it ever happened before?"*

Then, the Scriptural Example

In Genesis 15:6 it says:

Abraham believed God and it was credited to Him as righteousness.

In fact, Paul is going to use Abraham as an example of what it means to be justified by faith in Romans chapter four. As a Scriptural example of clearly having God's imputed righteousness: Was Abraham living consistent with his imputed righteousness when he sought to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant by fathering a child with Hagar in Genesis 16? Was he living uprightly when he gave his wife away to a pagan king (for the second time) in Genesis 20? I hope you answered "No" to both questions.

Note that both of these incidents occurred *after* Abraham was declared righteous in Genesis Chapter 15! Was his behavior desirable? Absolutely not! Did it have negative consequences? Of course! But was He justified before God the entire time? Yes! The Scripture declares it as fact in the Old Testament and references it as proof in the New Testament! (Romans 4:3, 22)

We'll spend more time on this topic later. For now, if you have saved family members who are not walking with the Lord, pray for the prodigals to return, confess their sin, and return to walking with the Lord while relying on their righteous standing. For:

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. Titus 3:5

Paul's focus on how we obtain a righteousness that will withstand the scrutiny of a Holy God, and as a result obtain a *justified* status, is laser-like in its focus. But, for a minute step back and consider the bulk of the New Testament Scriptures in order to realize something that should thrill your soul. Lost mankind is not so much in need of a single cure. Much like a terminal patient with multiple system failures, the imputation of the very righteousness of God per Romans 3:22 meets one desperate need, but is it all we need! Yes! In fact, God's so-great

salvation meets every need:

- John's Gospel describes how we can have His life—eternal life (John 3:16, 36)
- Jesus speaks of providing a place in His home in heaven (John 14:1-3)
- The Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14)
- We are going to receive an eternal body like that of our Savior (I Corinthians 15:49)

I could keep going, but this short list gives you a glimpse of the complete salvation that is ours through faith in the person and work of Christ. Ponder your eternal life, imputed righteousness, and so much more—and rejoice in it!

There is so much more packed into the Book of Romans, and we'll continue to develop it in the next booklet.





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