

FAITH AND JUSTIFICATION: THE WAY FOR THE WORLD TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD

(85)

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[Romans 3:21-5:21](#)

(Continuation from 12/31/17)

A. Righteousness: The Way to be Right With God, [Romans 3:21-26](#)

[Romans 3:21-26 \(NASB\)](#)

²¹ “But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;
²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
²⁴ being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;
²⁵ whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. *This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed;*
²⁶ for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.”

[\(Romans 3:21-26\)](#) Introduction— Righteousness: the “righteousness of God” is used in three ways in Scripture.

1. Righteousness means God’s character. It means the righteousness, justice, and perfection which God Himself possesses and shows.
2. Righteousness refers to man’s lack of godly character. It means the sinful, depraved, unrighteous, unjust, and imperfect nature and behavior of man.
3. Righteousness means the righteousness, that is, the perfection which God provides for man in Christ Jesus. When a man allows the Lord Jesus Christ to take his sins, he is given the righteousness of God. Christ robes the man in the righteousness of God Himself—by faith ([2 Corinthians 5:21](#); [Philippians 3:9](#)).

[2 Corinthians 5:21 \(NASB\)](#)

²¹ “He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

[Philippians 3:9 \(NASB\)](#)

⁹ “And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.”

1. Righteousness is now revealed (v.21-22).
2. Righteousness is for everyone (v.22-23).
3. Righteousness is only possible through justification (v.24).
4. Righteousness is by an act of God alone: by propitiation (v.25).
5. Righteousness has one purpose: to proclaim God's personal righteousness (v.25-26).

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The context is usually clear as to which meaning is meant. (See below [Deeper Study # 5, Righteousness—Galatians 2:15-16](#) for more discussion from last week.)

3. How God justifies a man. The word to justify, (*diakioun*) is a legal word taken from the courts. It pictures man on trial before God. Man is seen as having committed the most heinous of crimes; he has rebelled against God and broken his relationship with God. How can he restore that relationship? Within human courts if a man is acquitted, he is declared innocent, but this is not true within the Divine Court. When a man appears before God, he is anything but innocent; he is utterly guilty and condemned accordingly.

But when a man sincerely trusts Christ, then God takes that man's faith and counts it as righteousness. By such God counts the man—judges him, treats him—as if he was innocent. The man is not made innocent; he is guilty. He knows it and God knows it, but God treats him as innocent. **“God justifies the ungodly”**—an incredible mercy, a wondrous grace.

How do we know this? How can we know for sure that God is like this? Because Jesus said so. He said that God loves us. We are sinners, yes; but Christ said that we are very, very dear to God.

Genesis 15:6 (NASB)

⁶“Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

Acts 13:39 (NASB)

³⁹“And through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses.”

Romans 3:23-24 (NASB)

²³“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

²⁴being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.”

Romans 4:3 (NASB)

³“For what does the Scripture say? **“ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS CREDITED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.”**

Romans 5:1 (NASB)

¹“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Romans 5:9 (NASB)

⁹“Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”

Romans 6:7 (NASB)

⁷“For he who has died [counted dead, justified] is freed from sin.”

Romans 8:33 (NASB)

³³“Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies.”

1 Corinthians 6:11 (NASB)

¹¹ “Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.”

Galatians 2:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ “Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.”

Galatians 3:6 (NASB)

⁶ “Even so Abraham BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Galatians 3:24 (NASB)

²⁴ “Therefore the Law has become our tutor *to lead us to Christ*, so that we may be justified by faith.”

Philippians 3:9 (NASB)

⁹ “And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the Law*, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.”

DEEPER STUDY # 6

Galatians 2:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ “Nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified.”

(Galatians 2:16) Faith versus Works— Self-Righteousness: Why is it that a man can never be justified nor secure righteousness by works and law? Why is it that a man can never approach God by works and law?

1. There are two ways that a man can try to secure righteousness and approach God.

- a.** A man can try to work to secure righteousness; he can do all he can to keep the law of God and to please God. But note: a man can do this...
- 1) only if he can keep the law perfectly, never breaking it once and never violating it a single time...
 - 2) only if he can make sure that every single thing he ever does or thinks is perfectly good and righteous and pure...
 - 3) only if he can please God in every act, word, and thought, never displeasing God in anything.

Only if a man can do this can he secure righteousness by works and law. But what man can be perfect and good and righteous and pure in every single act,

word, and thought? It is absolutely impossible to secure righteousness by works and law. A person may try to approach God through works and law, but he can never achieve perfection—not perfect righteousness and holiness without which *no man* shall ever see God.

Hebrews 12:14 (NASB)

¹⁴“Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.”

Matthew 7:22-23 (NASB)

²²“Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’

²³ And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”

Romans 3:20 (NASB)

²⁰“Because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.”

Galatians 3:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.”

James 4:17 (NASB)

¹⁷“Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.”

b. A man can believe that Jesus Christ is God’s gift of righteousness to the world—that God so loved the world...

- 1) that He gave His Son to live a perfect life upon earth in order to secure the Perfect and Ideal Righteousness for man.
- 2) that He gave His Son to take the unrighteousness of man upon Himself and to die for man, that is, to bear the judgment of unrighteousness for man.
- 3) that he gave His Son to arise from the dead for man in order to conquer death and to give man a new and perfect life that is eternal.

A man can believe that God loves him and takes his faith in Christ and counts it as righteousness.

A man can believe that God loves him and accepts him because he honors His Son Jesus Christ—honors Jesus Christ by believing and following Him.

A man can believe that God loves His Son so much that He will take any man who honors His Son and do anything for him. If the man believes in Jesus Christ for righteousness, then God will count the man righteous.

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB)

⁸“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

Titus 3:4-5 (NASB)

⁴“But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared,

⁵He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.”

2. Note another point: the two ways that men try to approach God are completely different from each other. Faith and works are incompatible. Faith is always the opposite of works.

⇒ If a man works to keep the law in order to be righteous, then he can offer to God only *self-righteousness*, only the righteousness of the works *he has done*.

⇒ If a man trusts the righteousness of Jesus Christ *for his righteousness*, then he can offer the righteousness of Christ to God. He can come to God in the righteousness of Christ.

God always accepts the righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ. For any man who truly trusts the righteousness of Christ—who truly gives Christ all he is and has—God accepts that man’s trust as righteousness. The man is not righteous, but God takes his trust in Christ and accepts it as righteousness.

3. Note still another fact: a man who *believes God for righteousness* approaches God entirely differently than the man who approaches God in his own self-righteousness.

a. The man who approaches God in his own righteousness...

- 1) presents his self-righteousness to God *by himself*.
- 2) depends upon his own righteousness.
- 3) trust his own righteousness.
- 4) believes in his own righteousness.
- 5) declares that he has the strength and power to make himself righteous and acceptable to God.

b. The man who approaches God in the righteousness of Jesus Christ...

- 1) presents his love and trust in the righteousness of Jesus Christ as his righteousness. (God could never turn down a person who loved and trusted His Son with all his heart.)
- 2) rejects dependence upon himself and depends upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ.
- 3) gives up trusting his own righteousness and trusts the righteousness of Christ.
- 4) no longer believes in his own righteousness, but believes in Christ for righteousness.

- 5) declares that he does not have the power to make himself righteous and acceptable to God; he trusts the power of God to make him righteous and acceptable.

Note what this is saying: a man either believes he has the power to save himself and to keep himself from dying or else he believes that God has the power to save him. A man either trusts his own power for salvation and life or else he trusts God's power. If he believes that he has the power to save himself, then he works to make himself righteous and to live forever. If he believes that God alone has the power to save him, then he trusts God for righteousness and life.

In conclusion, no one is ever justified by works or by law. We may try to secure righteousness by works and law, but it is always self-righteousness, and self-righteousness always ends up with self: in the grave—dead, having passed the way of all flesh—short of God's glory and perfection and disqualified from ever living with God. Self-righteousness is never acceptable to God; works and law can never justify a man and make him perfect.

However, we can secure righteousness by faith. We can trust God as a child trusts his father. We can trust that God loves us enough to count our love and trust for His Son as righteousness.

FAITH IN CHRIST IS GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS, THE ONLY RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT MAKES A PERSON ACCEPTABLE TO GOD

Romans 3:21-22 (NASB)

²¹“But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
²²even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction.”

Romans 10:4 (NASB)

⁴“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”

Philippians 3:9 (NASB)

⁹“And may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith.”

1 Corinthians 1:30 (NASB)

³⁰“But by His [God] doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)

²¹“He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

Colossians 3:3 (NASB)

³“For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”

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4. Note one other fact: righteousness by works honors and makes man supreme and preeminent, the center and core of life. Righteousness by faith honors God and makes God supreme and preeminent, the center and core of life. God is the One to be obeyed out of a heart of love, adoration, and appreciation for what He has done ([Romans 2:29](#)).

Romans 2:29 (NASB)

²⁹ “But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.”