

Romans 1 - 4: The Righteousness of God (Justification)

Recorded Sunday, March 30, 2008; Wayne ODonnell; <http://bible.ag>

Rom1:1-1:17 Introduction

Rom1:1-3 “Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Theme: The Gospel of God. Incorrect to picture Jesus as persuading the Father to forgive us because the gospel was God the Father’s idea. Gospel (from “good spiel”) means “good news”. It’s good news because it’s the gospel “of God”, not “of man”. It’s about something God has done for man. If it was about something man needs to do for God, it would not be good news.

Rom 1:16-17 “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, ... for therein is the righteousness of God revealed.”

Book of Romans is about Salvation. Salvation is comprised of 3 parts: “The Righteousness of God”=Justification (Salvation Past) Rom1-Rom4, “The Glory of God”=Glorification (Salvation Future) Rom5-Rom11, and “The Will of God” Sanctification (Salvation Present) Rom12-Rom16.

Believing the gospel results directly only in justification, receiving “the righteousness of God”, but because of the way we are justified, justification always results in glorification and sanctification. So the main proposition of the book of Romans is: All who have been justified will be glorified and all who have been justified are being sanctified, because of the way they were justified.

Rom1:18-1:32. The Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men

Rom1:18 “For the wrath of God ...”. How many of us would begin our presentation of the good news of the gospel like this? “... is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth”. Ungodliness comes before unrighteousness because it leads to unrighteousness. Cannot have morality without godliness. What is ungodliness? Rom1:21 “when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful”

God allows men to become thoroughly unrighteousness as a judgment against their ungodliness. Body: Rom1:24 “Wherefore God also gave them up ..., to dishonour their own bodies between themselves”.

Soul: Rom1:26 “God gave them up unto vile affections”.

Spirit: Rom1:28 “God gave them over to a reprobate mind”.

List of unrighteous deeds:

Rom1:29-31 “Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful”.

Rom2:1-16 The Judgment of God

According to Truth: Rom2:2 “But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things”.

According to Deeds: Rom2:6-10 “Who will render to every man according to his deeds:”

Group 1: “to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life:”

Group 2: “but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish”.

The previous section shows that we all fall into group 2.

According to Law: Rom2:12-16 “For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law. For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.” Some sin with law, some without; some perish with law, some without; but all sin and all perish.

Rom2:17-3:20 The Law Says Men Are Sinners

The Law Condemns All: Rom3:9-20 “We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” The best the law can do for us is help us know we’re sinners.

Rom3:21-31 Justification By Faith

Without Law: Rom3:21 “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed (to) by the law and the prophets”. We don’t have to keep the ten commandments to be counted just before God. Jesus was asked in Mark 10:17-20, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, ... If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal”, etc. It’s true that if you can keep the law perfectly, or have “patient continuance in well doing” as we saw in chapter 2, you will have eternal life. But Jesus was trying to get this man to realize that he could never be that good and that he needed salvation. The righteousness of God is provided “without the law”, and without any law, or any good deeds, or it would be a righteousness of man. Even if men were to keep the ten commandments through power which God provided, it would at least include the righteousness of men, but we never see that phrase in these chapters, only the phrase “the unrighteousness of men” Rom2:17.

By Faith: Rom3:22 “Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe”. Justification does not require repentance, or being baptized, or

being good, or going to church, or going to confession. If any of those things were required this would be the place for Paul to say so, but he says the righteousness of God is given to “all them that believe”, even if they’ve done none of those other things. In fact, if we do anything else for the purpose of justification then we don’t have faith in Christ because it means we don’t think what Christ did on the cross is sufficient to satisfy God’s justice.

Some individual scriptures seem to indicate that more than faith alone is required when their context is not understood. John the Baptist preached “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” Mk1:4, and Jesus preached, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” Mt4:17 in the first half of his ministry. But in the Survey of Matthew I shared with you a few months ago we saw he stopped preaching “Repent” in the second half of his ministry because the kingdom was no longer “at hand” since that generation of the nation of Israel rejected it in Mt.10 and it would have to await a later generation of Israel. This 4-chapter section of Romans is entirely about justification and is a complete treatise on the subject. If repentance or any other thing was necessary for justification, Paul would be gravely negligent to omit to tell us about it. The book of John is entirely about how to have eternal life, and it’s by faith alone. The Greek word “pistos” translated “faith”, “believe”, and “trust” is used more times in John than any other book because, John20:31 “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” Not “that going to church”, “that being baptized”, or “that being good” ye might have life through his name, but “that believing ye might have life through his name”.

Redemption & Propitiation: Rom3:23-25 “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.” All sinned ... being justified? How can a just God do this? Grace=getting something good you don’t deserve. Freely: for us but Christ paid. Redemption: A rich relative pays the price to buy a poor relative out of the slavery he sold himself into. Propitiation: Christ appeased the wrath of God by bearing it as our substitute. Even though Christ died for all, if we are self-righteous we can trust in our own righteousness and be judged by our own works (and suffer the wrath ourselves at the judgment), but if we trust in Christ his substitution will count for us. He received our sin; we receive his righteousness. Phil3:9 “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”

Just & Justifier: Rom3:25-26 “To declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” God was a righteous judge even though he forbear David’s sins of adultery and murder because God knew that Jesus would one day die in David’s place. Today God can only be just and justifier of those who believe in Jesus. If he was a justifier of a sinner (every man) that Jesus’ substitution doesn’t count for (an unbeliever) then he would not be a just judge. Prov17:15 “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD.”

Rom4:1-25 The Law Says Justification Is By Faith

Imputed Righteousness: Rom4:2-3 “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was

counted unto him for righteousness.” Abraham was not righteous in himself; he had to be “counted” as being righteous even though he himself was not.

Only Available to Him That Worketh Not: Rom4:4-5 “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. “ When your employer pays you, it’s not grace, it’s debt because he owes you what you’ve earned for your work, even if he helps you do the work, because you’ve put in the hours. If he pays you when you don’t even show up for work, that’s grace. The only man that is justified is the one who has no works relevant to justification. You have to be completely outside the system of works-judgment-reward to be justified. You have to be in the system of faith-grace-gift.

Imputed Righteousness: Rom4:6-8 “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” It’s not that God forgives our bad works and gives us good works; it’s that our works don’t enter into our justification at all. Our good works are not considered; our bad works are not considered (that’s the blessed part); we are accounted an imputed righteousness “without works”.

The only way to be justified is to avoid being judged by our works. If we are ever judged by our works, we will perish. It is important to understand that even though God will judge “every man according to his deeds” Rom2:6, not all will go through the judgment personally, since Christ already went through the judgment for those who believe on him. Hebrews 9:27 “As it is appointed unto men once to die but after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” Many believers will not die even once, but be “raptured” at the last trump. The believers that do die are said to “fall asleep”, since it is only appointed unto men to die once, and Christ already did that for us. Same with the judgment.

Rev20:5-6 First Resurrection: “This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” Notice there is no judgment for those raised in the first resurrection. All who are raised a thousand years later after the millennial kingdom will be judged, and judgment of men’s works always results in condemnation. The Last Judgment is not to determine who is justified and who is condemned, but rather how much punishment each person in the judgment should be sentenced to for their works. Rev20:7-15 Second Death: “And when the thousand years are expired, ... I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” You don’t want to go through the judgment; you don’t want to try to be justified by your works.

Inheriting the Promise: Rom4:13-22 “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. ... it

is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness.” God told Abraham to look at the stars and told him, “So shall thy seed be” in Gen15. Abraham believed the word of God, and was thereby justified. We are justified the same way – by faith in God’s word, even though the content of what we believe is different since Christ was not yet known in Abraham’s time. True faith is always “according to that which was spoken”. It is not presumptuous to have faith; rather it gives “glory to God” because it recognizes that God keeps his word. It is not humility to have doubts about one’s justification, but rather it’s dishonoring to God who cannot lie or fail to keep his promises. True faith is always “fully persuaded”.

Written For You! Rom4:23-25 “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.” These doctrines are not theoretical or philosophical. Paul invites you to act upon them now. In your heart, speak to God. Tell him you trust in his Son as your substitute and you accept the righteousness he offers you. He will give you his righteousness just for asking because Rom3:22 says “The righteousness of God ... is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe”.