
The Messenger



"... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" Romans 10:15

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Evangelist and Editor:

Dempsey Collins

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The Gospel – God’s Righteousness for Man

Part 3

by Dempsey Collins

It is important to remember that the righteousness of man only exists in relation to God. There is no righteousness independent of God. Right conduct is only right because God says it’s right and wrong conduct is wrong because God says it’s wrong.

God is inherently righteous. His righteousness is autonomous of everything and everyone. On the other hand, man cannot be righteous apart from God.

The Bible speaks of righteousness as something bestowed on man by God or from God as a gift. In other words a person is declared righteous by God through faith in Jesus. This is the sense in which righteousness is used in Romans 1:17 and through most of the letter. Although we are sinners condemned to death, through faith in the blood of Jesus, God declares us acquitted of all sin, not guilty, justified, righteous through the merit of Jesus expiatory sacrifice. This blessed condition of righteousness is a gift from God and is revealed by Him in the gospel.

Proof of righteousness used in this sense is fourfold:

1. In Romans 1:17 Paul declares “the righteousness of God” to be “revealed in the gospel.” But the personal righteousness of God is revealed throughout Scripture from beginning to end. It does not begin to be revealed in the gospel.

2. The expression “from faith unto faith” reveals the way in which this righteousness is received. This righteousness is given as a result of faith in the redemptive work of Jesus. I am declared righteous by God on the ground of Christ’s work not my own. Dana and Mantey’s Greek grammar render the verse “By means of faith” (D. & M. p. 103). Thayer renders v. 17 “Springing from faith (and availing) to (arouse) faith (in those who as yet have it not)” (Thayer, p. 513).
3. Paul’s argument summary in 5:1, 2. “Therefore having justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.” In these verses Paul restates in amplified form the theme of Romans 1:16, 17. Chapter five is the climax of Paul’s treatise on justification through faith and he begins his summary by restating his theme.
4. Righteousness through faith is the heart of Paul’s argument in 3:19-4:25. *¹⁹Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin. ²¹But 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.*

This is the message of Romans and the message of the gospel. We are saved by faith, i.e., declared righteous, justified, acquitted of sin by God not by works of law but by faith in Jesus completed work of redemption. In chapters 6, 12-15, Paul shows the right response to being declared righteous by God, i.e., right living.

Righteousness in Romans is not something you earn; it is not something you feel; it is something you receive as a gift from God through faith in Jesus. Righteousness in Romans is not based on my performance, perfection or goodness. Righteousness in Romans is God’s active intervention on our behalf. Terms such as righteousness, rightness, justified, acquittal are legal terms commonly used in a court room. In this case God is the Judge, we are the accused and Jesus is the advocate.

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