



Christian Life Fellowship

Becoming fully devoted followers of Christ



Righteousness

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Rev. David Koch

Introduction:

We continue today with our study of Romans. By this point in his letter to the Romans, Paul has made it quite clear that it didn't matter whether one was a Jew or Gentile, that all had sinned and were guilty of breaking God's laws. There is no one righteous, not even one. There is no one who on his own seeks after God. We seek God by His grace and the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul makes it clear through the end of this 3rd chapter that the only way we are declared righteous is from God.

I. Righteousness is Attained by Faith

Romans 3:23-24 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: Justification by *faith alone in Christ alone* is one of the great themes of the gospel. The word justification means to be just as if I'd never sinned. In fact, we can go from being an enemy of God and at enmity with God, to becoming one of His prized possessions and His friend.

The great question that people have asked since man first disobeyed God and sinned is, "How can I be right with God? What can I do to have God's favor?" By reading this letter to the Romans, we understand that we can't get right with God by trying to keep the law. The law can't save us, neither can our gender, race, heritage or our works. Then what else is left? The only thing that is left is to trust in God's grace. If you and I have to stand before a

righteous God on judgment day, how will we plead? We can't say we have never broken God's laws. We are all guilty of sinning, but by *faith alone in Christ alone* and His work on the cross, we can be forgiven and made free from our sin.

The word justified here means to be regarded as innocent or free. Any document can be left justified, right justified or centered. To justify means "to bring in line with." My sinful nature is brought in line with Christ's righteous nature and His nature frees me and makes me innocent. The grace of God refers to the divine influence upon our hearts. God's divine influence on our hearts did not come cheaply. To experience His grace on our hearts is a humbling, powerful, life-changing experience.

One can clearly see in the cross the mercy and justification that God offers to sinful man. There at the cross is a revelation of the righteousness of God. At the cross sin stands

condemned. At the cross sin is branded as utterly hostile to God. The Savior who wholly identified Himself with sinful man held on to the end. He vowed if the world were to be condemned, He would share and bear its condemnation. He did all that needed to be done for man's salvation.

The fact of our being justified is at the heart of the gospel. When we accept this truth in faith, then we become united with Christ so that we have a new standing in God's sight. A bond is formed between Christ and us in which an exchange takes place. The exchange seems hardly equitable, my sinfulness for His righteousness.

Justification is an act that happens with faith. There are no degrees of justification; it is not a process! Each believer has the same right standing before God. This act is something that God does, not man. We cannot justify ourselves before God. Becoming justified does not mean that God makes us righteous, but that He declares us righteous. This is a legal matter. We do not want to confuse justification and sanctification. Sanctification is the process where we become more and more like Christ. This work may change us daily, but justification never changes. Under the law, righteousness came by behaving, but under the gospel, righteousness comes by believing. Will that belief impact your behavior? **YOU BET IT WILL!**

To be redeemed means the ransom has been paid. A story told by Paul Lee Tan illustrates the meaning of redemption. He said that when A.J. Gordon was pastor of a church in Boston, he met a young boy in front of the sanctuary carrying a rusty cage in which several birds fluttered nervously. Gordon inquired, "Son, where did you get those birds?" The boy replied, "I trapped them out in the field." "What are you going to do with them?" "I'm going to play with them, and then I guess I'll just feed them to an old cat we have at home." When Gordon offered to buy them, the lad exclaimed, "Mister, you don't want them, they're just little old wild birds and can't sing very well." Gordon replied, "I'll give you \$2 for the cage and the birds." "Okay, it's a deal, but you're making a bad bargain." The exchange was made and

the boy went away whistling, happy with his shiny coins. Gordon walked around to the back of the church property, opened the door of the small wire coop, and let the struggling creatures soar into the blue. The next Sunday he took the empty cage into the pulpit and used it to illustrate his sermon about Christ's coming to seek and to save the lost -- paying for them with His own precious blood. "That boy told me the birds were not songsters," said Gordon, "but when I released them and they winged their way heavenward, it seemed to me they were singing, 'Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed!'" *Our Daily Bread.*

The law condemns us and causes us to stand with only one plea – GUILTY. You and I have been held captive to sin but Christ has purchased our pardon and set us at liberty. When a person trusts Christ to justify them, he will want to sing, "Redeemed, redeemed, redeemed!"

Romans 4:7-8 "Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sins are put out of sight. Yes, what joy for those whose sin is no longer counted against them by the Lord."

There is blessedness and a joy that comes to those who trust God to forgive them of their sins. God doesn't count our sin against us when we repent and confess it and turn from it. When we confess sin to God, we acknowledge and agree with what He already knows about us.

II. Faith and works

There is absolutely nothing we can do to earn our redemption or to work in order to secure for ourselves the salvation that God offers to us.

James 2:20-23 When will you ever learn that faith that does not result in good deeds is useless? Don't you remember that our ancestor Abraham was declared right with God because of what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see, he was trusting God so much that he was willing to do whatever God told him to do. His faith was made complete by what he did—by his actions. And so it happened just as the Scriptures say: "Abraham believed God, so God

declared him to be righteous." He was even called "the friend of God."

Abraham, who was a man of faith, was not made right with God through his works. He was made right with God by believing God's promises. He did not boast in who he was, what he did or what he knew. Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.

With this illustration, we remember the story of how God spoke to Abraham and told him to offer his only son Isaac as a sacrifice to God. Isaac was his only son and Abraham and Sarah had raised him up through adolescence to young man hood. It was through Isaac that the promise of a Savior would come to pass. Abraham acted in faith on God's promises and found God's favor.

I don't believe it is possible to have living faith and not do something with that faith for God. God did not pay the price to redeem us only for us to suck air and take up space. We have a purpose and we better be redeeming the days that God gives us. Teach us to number our days

Conclusion:

On the basis of Christ's finished work, we are brought in line with his righteousness. This is God's gift to us and in order for any gift to have value, it has to be received and used. Live your life like the redeemed, justified follower of Christ you are in Jesus!

oh Lord that we might have a heart of wisdom. God redeemed us so that we could share the joy of forgiveness and redemption with others.

The book of Hebrews talks about Abraham as a man of faith. He had flaws. He broke God's laws. But he trusted God and took God at His word. God saw fit to justify Abraham even though Jesus hadn't been born yet or died yet. Paul describes it this way. When we work, we don't look at the pay and say, "What a nice gift this person is giving to me." We get paid for the job that we have done. It is compensation for our effort, time, energy, creativity, diligence, production etc. The employer is obligated legally and morally to compensate the people who work for him for the job they have done.

There is no way that we could expect God to pay us favorably for the life we have lived, without it being a gift. If we could really work to earn our way into God's favor and heaven, Jesus never would have had to come and die. God is just and must punish sin, but he is merciful and ready to justify us and forgive all our sin.