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## The Revelation of God's Righteousness

*Romans, Part XVII*

Romans 3:21-26

Stuart W. Bryan

### I. The Chief Point of the Whole Bible

The Reformer Martin Luther declared that this passage is "*the chief point, and the very central place of the Epistle, and of the whole \_\_\_\_\_.*"

<sup>21</sup>But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup>even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, <sup>26</sup>to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

### II. The Revelation of God's Righteousness

#### A. God's Righteous Salvation (21-22a cf. 1:16-17)

The Gospel reveals *the righteousness of God*, His holy determination to vindicate His Name in the face of sin and death. So how does the Gospel reveal *the righteousness of God*? First, it reveals God's *righteous judgment* of all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men (1:18-3:20). *But now*, second, the Gospel reveals God's *righteous salvation* of all those who turn from their ungodliness and unrighteousness and believe in His Son (21-22a). The old covenant revealed our utter inability as humans to save ourselves from sin and death (3:20). *But now*, what we could not do, God has done. Through faith in Jesus, anyone *who believes* can be forgiven his guilt (3:19) and justified in God's sight (3:20).

#### B. God's Righteous Redemption (22b-24)

All have sinned and failed to reflect the glory of God which we were created to reflect. Hence, we can only be \_\_\_\_\_, set right with God and declared righteous in His sight, *freely*. We cannot merit God's favor through our own good deeds. But we can be *justified freely by His grace* [by His gift]. How? *Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*. Christ came to *redeem us*, to rescue us from our slavery to sin and wrath.

#### C. God's Righteous Propitiation (25-26 cf. Mk 10:45; Heb 10:4; Rev 13:8)

God *set forth Jesus as a propitiation by His blood*. A propitiatory sacrifice is one which removes \_\_\_\_\_. The sacrificial system highlighted that our sin and guilt could only be covered through the shedding of blood (Heb 9:22). But though the sacrifices proclaimed this need for forgiveness through a propitiatory sacrifice, the old covenant was powerless to accomplish it. Why? Because *it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away human sin* (Heb 10:4). *But now* Jesus has offered His life in place of ours. He came "*to give His life a ransom for many*" (Mk 10:45). Hence, God remains just and, at the same time, is able to \_\_\_\_\_ the one who has faith in Jesus.

### III. A Series of Revelations

#### A. Jesus' Death Reveals God's Wrath (2 Cor 5:21)

First, the death of our Lord Jesus reveals God's wrath. Paul insists that Jesus died as a *propitiation*, a sacrificial offering to appease God's wrath. God's wrath is His \_\_\_\_\_ judgment.

- 1:18 - "*The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...*"
- 1:32 - "*who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.*"
- 2:2-3 - "*But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. 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?*"
- 2:5 - "*...you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God...*"
- 2:16 - "*...in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.*"
- 3:5-6 - "*Is God unjust who inflicts wrath?... Certainly not! For then how will God judge the world?*"

God's *righteousness* demands that the *unrighteousness* of men be judged. So how can God be *righteous* and yet forgive the *unrighteous*? This is a dilemma. The Gospel announces that Christ offered Himself a sacrifice in our place, *He bore the wrath of God for us*. "*God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Cor 5:21). This is the great exchange.

#### B. Jesus' Death Reveals God's Righteousness (cf. Rom 6:1-19; 8:18-25)

Jesus' death not only reveals God's wrath against sin but God's righteousness:

- 21 - *the righteousness of God is revealed...*
- 22 - *even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ*
- 25 - *to demonstrate His righteousness*
- 26 - *to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just [righteous] and the justifier [the One who declares righteous] of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

The Scriptures connect God's wrath and His righteousness. If you give up the wrath of God against unrighteousness, then you give up the righteousness of God. The death of Jesus reveals God's righteousness, the way that God overcomes both moral and natural evil. The death of Jesus assures us that God does not turn a blind eye to sin. He takes sin and injustice seriously.

#### C. Jesus' Death Reveals God's Love (Jn 3:16; Rom 5:8)

There are many who misconstrue the wrath and righteousness of God. They imagine that the Father was determined to destroy humanity in His wrath, but that the kind and merciful Jesus convinced the Father to be loving and gracious instead. This is false. Jesus did not have to convince the Father to do something that the Father was unwilling to do. The Triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, orchestrated our redemption. "*God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us*" (Rom 5:8 cf. Jn 3:16).

### IV. Conclusion