

The Righteousness of God

Many people, nay, most people do not believe that God is righteous. With sickness, crime, war, hundreds murdered and thousands starving, how can God, if there be a God, be righteous. Even Job seemed to doubt it, but Scripture, God's revelation of Himself, declares without apology that God is righteous, for example:

Ps 11:7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

Ps 35:28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.

Ps 36:6 Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

Ps 71:19 Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee!

Ps 97:6 The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.

Ps 98:2 The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

Ps 119:142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

Ps 129:4 The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

Ps 145:17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

Isa 5:16 But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness.

Isa 41:26 Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that sheweth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words.

Isa 51:8 For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool: but my righteousness shall be for ever, and my salvation from generation to generation.

Mt 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Ro 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

1Jo 2:29 *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.*

Re 16:5 *And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.*

Re 19:2 *For true and righteous are his judgments:*

That God is righteous is clearly stated in the Scriptures and should be accepted without question by all who profess to know and to love the Lord. **If God is not righteous, God is not God.**

Moses declared;

Deut 32:4 *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*

and the Psalmist adds;

Ps 116:5 *Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.*

Ps 119:137 *Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.*

Ps 145:17 *The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.*

In theological studies of the attributes of God we always come to that of His justice and His righteousness. Quoting from two different Systematic Theologies;

“With respect to character, God is transparently holy and righteous in all His acts. When combined with love, His righteousness results in grace. God’s righteousness is ever absolute and perfect to infinity..” *Systematic Theology*, Lewis Chafer

“Closely related to His ethical holiness is God’s infinite, eternal, and unchangeable justice by which the Christian understands the Scriptures to declare that God is necessarily *righteous* in His judgments, always rewarding all His rational creatures directly proportional to their works, showing partiality to none but always acquitting the righteous and always condemning the guilty. As the judge of all the earth He is righteous in all His ways and judgments.” *A new Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, Robert Reymond

Our God is righteous of that there is no doubt. Why then does the Holy Spirit speak of those who do not know this?

Ro 10:3 *For they **being ignorant** of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

What is this righteous of God of which they are ignorant, a righteousness which they as well as ourselves, should know and to which they, and us, should submit?

In the third chapter of Romans there is a passage that is both very familiar to most of those who love the Lord, yet at the same time, one that is seldom really understood. That passage is Rom 3:21-26. Although this is several verses, it is only one sentence. A sentence that is the first profound break in the doctrinal epistles. A sentence that is the basis for all that is to come, yet a sentence from which one small phrase is usually extracted and presented in such a way as to destroy its introduction to the grace and righteousness of God.

Consider this wonderful sentence:

Rom 3:21-26 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 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, 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.

But now --

The wonder of His love, the greatness of His grace, what an introduction, what a change from the truths of the preceding chapter in Romans which have been summed up by the Holy Spirit quoting Psa 53:1-3

“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.”

“There is none righteous, no not one.” To call this a contradiction in His word is to demean the work of our Lord. To suggest that Noah, Abraham or Lot were righteous so this verse must not mean what it says is to display an ignorance of the very righteousness of God in view in this context as well as denying the finished work of Christ.

That the natural man is totally depraved, that is, incapable of responding to or pleasing God, is not only evident in the verses that precede our text but is the indisputable truth of His Word and the Biblical basis for the truth that there “is none righteous, no not one.”

Remember, the natural man:

Joh 3:5 cannot enter the Kingdom of God
Joh 6:44 cannot come to God on his own
Joh 8:43 cannot hear the Word of God
Joh 10:26 cannot believe unless he is already a sheep
Joh 14:17 cannot receive the Spirit of truth
Rom 3:10 is not righteous, no not one
Rom 8:5 cannot mind the things of the Spirit
Rom 8:7 cannot be subject to the law of God
Rom 8:8 cannot please God
1Cor 2:14 cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God

The Scriptural truth of man's total depravity has been discussed in detail in the chapter on Free Will.

“But now,” this is one of, if not the, greatest break in Scripture. Here, for the first time in the doctrinal epistles, the Holy Spirit introduces the work of God, and God alone, that is the underlying theme of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. His designed purpose in the person and work of Christ, the result of which in this context, reveals Him to be righteous and yet impute righteousness to those who are absolutely unrighteous. Here is one of, if not the most concise summary in all of Scripture of God's plan of redemption;

....with the full knowledge of man's condition, of his inability to meet the demands of God's righteousness; -

the righteousness of God --

This is a subjective genitive in the Greek. It is God's righteousness. The subject of this sentence, the truth of this sentence is not just a simple statement that God is righteous, that is self evident, it is the revelation of the means by which God's righteousness is untarnished in His dealings with our unrighteousness.

Think of it - “*God's righteousness!*”

without the law --

*The law was added because of the transgression until the seed should come to whom the promise was made, Gal 3:19. From the law comes both the knowledge of sin and man's inability to keep the law. If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law, Gal 3:21. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by **the faithfulness of Jesus Christ** might be given to them that believe, Gal 3:22.*

Although the law reveals the righteousness God, it also reveals the evident truth that man can not meet the demands of His righteousness, *but now* without the law, separate from law, separate from, apart from, anything man did or could do, God's righteousness..

is manifested --

This is a perfect in the Greek. Look what it says, God's righteousness has been perfectly revealed so that we are looking at the present reality of something that has been completely made manifest. God's righteousness has been revealed, made clearly manifest, and this has been done by God and by God alone separate from the law, a righteousness that was...

being witnessed by the law --

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

What is it that has been witnessed by the law, the Pentateuch? At the outset it was God, not Adam, who provided the lamb, the substitute, as a sacrifice for sin as well as clothing to cover the sin of Adam and Eve. They had nothing to do with it because they had no ability to cover their sin.

In addition, at the Passover it was the father, not the son, who provided the lamb, the substitute, and placed the blood on the door post and the lintel for the firstborn son. Not only did the son have nothing to do with his deliverance, he had nothing to do with being his father's son. It mattered not what he believed or what he did, if his father provided the blood he lived, if his father did not provide the blood, he died.

As the first born son was a type of the deliverance of His elect from death by the grace of God in Jesus Christ, so was the redemption of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. They did not ask to be delivered from the bondage of Egypt, they in fact resisted it, yet because they were His, God redeemed them. He did not make them His by delivering them from bondage, He delivered them from bondage because they were His.

The law --

Ex 20:2-17 I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it

thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Here is a summary of the law given by God. That no man could meet its demands was the truth that preceded our sentence in Romans and is repeated again in Galatians;

Ga 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

But the same books of the law revealed the substitute for the sins of His chosen people. They did not choose to be His people and they did not choose the means of atonement. An innocent substitute was called for and sacrifice was made by God's priest, not by the people, they were to do **no work**.

Le 16:17 And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel.

Le 16:30 For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.

They were to do no work! How many times must He command this before they realize that redemption is not a work of man but of God and God alone.

Le 16:29 do no work at all

Le 23:7 ye shall do no servile work

8 ye shall do no servile work

21 ye shall do no servile work

25 Ye shall do no servile work

28 ye shall do no work in that same day

*30 And **whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people.***

31 Ye shall do no manner of work

35 ye shall do no servile work therein.

36 it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein.

The innocent lamb was substituted for the people of the chosen nation. It was the High Priest, and him alone, who entered the Holy of Holies to sacrifice the substitute for the sins of the people, they did nothing! He commanded them over and over again not to do work of any kind. To add their work to the innocent substitute would defile the sacrifice, no longer would it be free from sin and thus could not be acceptable to God.

The law also manifested the work of the kinsman redeemer. The Holy Spirit uses the word גאל (gaw-al) translated both “kinsman” and “redeemer” to absolutely tie together God’s truth that the redeemer is, and must be, a kinsman. Every thing in the Word is designed to direct our attention to the Lord, and the truth of the kinsman redeemer is no exception. This was not primarily for the one in trouble in Israel but was to illustrate for us a type of our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember, for the one in difficulty, the one who could not help himself, could not pay his debt there was a solution:

Le 25:25 If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.

Le 25:48 After that he is sold he may be redeemed again; one of his brethren may redeem him:

Le 25:49 Either his uncle, or his uncle's son, may redeem him, or any that is nigh of kin unto him of his family may redeem him; or if he be able, he may redeem himself.

If one was not able but had a kinsman who was willing and able to redeem him, he could be redeemed. The book of Ruth is a beautiful picture of the work of the kinsman redeemer. All of this to picture the Lord Jesus Christ becoming our kinsman and our redeemer. He was our only kinsman who was without sin, thus He was the only one who could pay the price for our sin. *Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me,* John 5:39.

and the prophets --

1Pet 1:9 - Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

and the prophets --

Isa 9:6 - *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*

Isa 11:1 - *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears:*

But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

Isa 40:11 *He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

Isa 41:10 *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*

Isa 42:1 - *Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.*

Isa 42:6 *I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;*

Isa 53:1- *Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD*

hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Mic 5:2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Isa 11:5 And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.

Isa 41:10 Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

Isa 46:13 I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory.

The prophets manifested, made it clear, that our kinsman redeemer would be the faithful servant, the Lord Jehovah Himself who would become our substitute. That it was to be He who is wounded for our transgression and bruised for our iniquities. That He would be the innocent substitute who would take the place of His chosen and pay the price for their sin.

even the righteousness of God --

it must be understood that what has been witnessed by the law and the prophets is God's righteousness which -

which is by faith of Jesus Christ --

Here again the Genitive is subjective, it is "Jesus Christ's faithfulness." To translate this as faith in Christ as in the NAS, ESV, NIV or NKJV is to miss the meaning of the text, the very heart of the revelation. How can anyone fail to grasp that what has been manifested by the law and the prophets is not our faith in Christ but the grace of God in the provision of the innocent substitute, the Lord Himself, to die in the place of His own in order to satisfy His righteousness in the payment for their sin and that this is the faithfulness of Christ in His obedience to the death of the cross.

Surely we are not that innocent substitute. We are not that which was manifested by the law and the prophets, and just as clearly, we are not the basis upon which He justifies those who are His own. The witness of the law and the prophets has been a witness to the provision, not by us, but by God, of a capable and innocent substitute to be made sin for us. It is impossible in this context to suggest that God's righteousness is manifested by or based upon our faith or belief in Christ. Impossible!

It is God's righteousness that has been witnessed to, both by the law and the prophets and is now shown to be revealed in the faithfulness of Jesus Christ totally separate from anything man could do, it is the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Christ came to do the will of the Father, Heb 10:9, He was faithful, and in that faithfulness He obeyed, He was made sin for us who knew no sin in order that we be made the righteousness of God in Him, I Cor 5:21. The Greek work $\upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho$ - translated "for", means "in place of," "in our place," our substitute. Because of the disobedience of Adam the elect were made sinner so, in the same way, by the obedience of Christ the elect are made righteousness, Rom 5:19. They no more chose to be righteous than they chose to be made a sinner. It is impossible to make our sentence in Romans say that God's righteousness is manifest separate from anything man could do and then say that it is manifest by man's faith or belief in Christ. Surely we can not believe that God's righteousness is based upon something we do.

The fact is, the righteousness of God is revealed in the truth of the faithfulness, the obedience of Jesus Christ and His finished work in ransoming us, paying the price for sin so that God is righteous in forgiving all of our sin, not in man's belief in, or acceptance of this fact.

This work of God in Christ for us is beautifully stated in Colossians:

*Col 1:19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, **by him** to reconcile all things unto himself; **by him**, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. **And you**, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath **he reconciled** in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:*

unto all and upon all them that believe --

The righteousness of God, think of it, how great is the grace of our God, God's righteousness is unto all and upon all that believe. Here is faith in Christ as a result of the faithfulness of Christ.

Since it is so easy to insert some activity of man we must remember God commanding His people over and over again, "thou shalt do no work." Neglecting any arguments as to whether or not belief is work, it is important for us to consider what the Word means when the Holy Spirit speaks about "them that believe." It is at this point that man usually exalts himself and demeans the Lord Jesus Christ. "Them that believe" is not a statement of the sovereignty of man, nor any synergistic activity of man, that is, that God's work is dependent on man's belief.

It is a simple statement of fact, **His sheep**.

Joh 10:26-28 But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.

The Lord could not be clearer, one must be one of His sheep in order to believe. One does not become His sheep by believing but believes because he is already one of His sheep. *Believer* is a term sometimes used by the Holy Spirit when speaking of His sheep. Not only that, the sheep have already been given to Him by the Father, clearly, not by anything they did. The consistent teaching of the reformation was that spiritual life preceded belief. For example:

“The Reformed faith, on the other hand, refuses to compromise to that degree or to any other degree, however small, with naturalism. It teaches that regeneration is **prerequisite** for saving faith and that in regeneration the sinner is completely passive. As a corpse cannot bring itself to life, so the spiritually dead sinner cannot make the **slightest contribution** toward his second birth. The new birth is the work of God alone.” R. B. Kuiper, *Westminster Theological Journal, Vol 2*

Again this is clear in Joh 5:24, the one who hears and believes is one who has already passed (perfect tense) from death to life, if that were not true of him, he could not hear or believe. In Heb 12:2 Christ is both the author, (the initiator), and the finisher of our faith, our belief. In Phil 1:6 it is Christ who began the good work in us and it is He who will finish it. In John 1 we were born not by the will of the flesh but by the will of God. In 1 Peter we were not born by our will or of corruptible seed, flesh, but by the Word of God. In John 8 one cannot hear unless he is already from God. In Matthew 1 Christ did not come to make them His people, they were already that, He came to rescue them from their sins.

for there is no difference --

The righteousness of God is “unto all and upon all” His sheep, those who believe because they are His sheep. This is true of those who were under law before the cross as well as those who are under grace after the cross. It is not because they are Jew or Gentile, weak or strong, rich or poor, brilliant or stupid, in fact, not because of when they lived or of anything they are or do because there is no difference since -

For all have sinned --

they have all sinned, all of those upon whom the righteousness of God through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ has come. They had not only all sinned but they-

and come short of the glory of God --

They had all come short of the glory of God. It is this truth, coming short of the glory of God, quoted from the Psalms that had just preceded the revelation of God's righteousness at the beginning of our sentence.

“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.”

They had “all sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Here is the phrase that is so often quoted out of context. This is the “verse” that is common on most church bulletins and Christian internet sites but does it really say what they intend it to say? Remember, this is only one short phrase out of this wonderful sentence.

There is no doubt that all died spiritually because of Adam's transgression but this verse is not the one to use if that is the truth we intend to convey. Only His elect, His sheep could sin and come short of the glory of God, that concept is completely foreign to the non-elect.

More than that, the Word declares they were all, **all** of those who sinned and came short of the glory of God - -

Being justified freely by his grace --

Isn't it astounding that Christians who are supposed to be purveyors of good news would pick one small phrase out of a sentence? *“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* Is this good news? If we are going to break up the sentence and rip a few words from it why not the next phrase, *“justified freely by His grace?”* This is really good news yet we have never seen it in any church bulletin or web site. The fact is, the second phrase is much closer to the meaning of the sentence than the preceding one. God is righteous in justifying all of His sheep, those who had sinned and come short of His glory because Jesus Christ died in their place.

How were all of those, **all of them**, who sinned and came short of the glory of God justified? They, His people, were justified freely, without a cause, by His grace, not by anything they did. Here is the basis for the truth in Eph 2:9, *lest any man should boast.*

through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus --

Here is a wonderful dative, the redemption that both resides in Christ Jesus and the redemption that is because of Christ Jesus. There is probably no more precious word to the Christian than the word redeemer or redemption, yet since it speaks of the price paid for our sin the word ransom comes closer to the Scriptural meaning. By the grace of God He ransomed us, all of His own, all of them! We could not pay the price for sin, in fact, we did not ask Him to pay the price and we had nothing to do with the payment of the price.

There are three Greek words the Holy Spirit uses to present the truth of redemption:

We have been purchased in the market place - αγοράζω -

1Co 6:20 *For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.*

1Co 7:23 *Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men.*

2Pe 2:1 *But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.*

Because He paid the price we have been ransomed, set free from sin - -

Mt 20:28 *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Mr 10:45 *For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Lu 1:68 *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,*

Tit 2:14 *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*

1Pe 1:18 *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;*

We have been taken out of marketability, never to be sold again, redeemed - εξαγοράζω -

Ga 3:13 *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:*

Ga 4:5 *To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

Once again it is clear that He did it all, we had nothing to do with our redemption. We did not pay the price, could not pay the price. We did not ask Him to pay the price or cooperate with Him in the payment of the price. As in the case of the new birth, no Scripture couples belief with redemption. Since redemption is Christ's work and not ours, it is done and it is permanent. He has perfected forever those who are set apart, Heb 10:14. Again, this is why the Holy Spirit says in Eph 2:9 *lest any man should boast*, since He did it all, none can boast

Whom God hath set forth a propitiation through faith in his blood --

Propitiated, think of it, God is completely satisfied as far as our sin is concerned. Who was set forth to display this? Christ! Not us or our belief. It is because of His faithfulness that God is completely satisfied with the payment for our sin. Three Greek words are used by the Holy Spirit in dealing with God's complete satisfaction:

To appease, propitiate - *ιλαμος*

1Jo 2:2 *And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*

1Jo 4:10 *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

To propitiate, to completely appease - *ιλασκομαι*

Heb 2:17 *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*

The place of propitiation - *ιλαστηριον*, Jesus Christ

Ro 3:25 *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;*

It was God who set Christ forth a propitiation by means of His, Christ's, faithfulness, *διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι* *by means of the faithfulness in His blood*. It was His obedience unto death that fully appeased God as far as sin is concerned. We did not ask Him to do this, we had no participation in this and He did not do this because we believed, He did this to declare that His righteousness is satisfied because of the faithfulness of Christ in being made sin for us and dying in our place to pay sins's debt. Surely no one would suggest that God's righteousness is satisfied just because we place our faith in Christ.

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.

If the sovereign God had a problem, if such a thing were possible, it was how to maintain His righteousness and His justice and still make righteous His elect who had sinned and come short of the glory of God. They could not do it, how was He to do it?

It appeared as though He had overlooked the sins of those in the past, those from Adam to Christ. Clearly none of them can place their faith in Christ to appease God. There is absolutely nothing they can do to be born from above and have forgiveness of sin. In the same way that God is appeased as far as their sin is concerned so He is appeased as far as our sin is concerned. Again, they did nothing and we did nothing to appease God, Christ did it all. Thus He is just when He justifies those who were and are His based on the finished work of Christ.

He could not be righteous and ignore the sins of His people. He could not be just if He were to overlook the sins of His elect and not the sins of those who were not His elect. But He could manifest His righteousness, more than that, He could magnify His righteousness by paying the price for our sin, by placing the sins of His own on Himself and dying as their substitute.

As witnessed by the law and the prophets, He provided Himself by becoming our kinsman, our substitute, a substitute capable and able to pay the price. Thus He declares that He is righteous in justifying us, His sheep (them that believe), because Christ paid the price by becoming our kinsman, being made sin for us and dying in our place. Because of the obedience of Christ in His substitutionary death, God is completely satisfied in the payment of our sin debt so that He maintains His justice while justifying His own.

The question asked above, “what is this righteousness of God to which they, as well as ourselves, should know and to which we should submit?”

*Ro 10:3 For they **being ignorant** of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*

The answer, of course, is that God in His righteousness can not look upon sin. That His sheep who were dead in sin and had nothing but unrighteousness, could not in any way establish their own righteousness. That sin is so opposed to the righteousness of God that in order to redeem us He must sacrifice His only Son, His beloved Son as our substitute. Not only could we not make payment for our sins, there could be no other substitute who could meet the demands of God’s righteousness. In being our substitute He was made sin for us! How can we comprehend what that meant to our Lord. The horror that He be made sin. How righteous is our God, so righteous that in order to meet the demands of that righteousness He had to take our sin on Himself, be made sin and die in our place.

We are to submit to His righteousness and not make any attempt, that is *do no work*, to establish our own righteousness. His righteousness revealed in the finished work of Jesus Christ who died in our place and is the **complete** satisfaction for our sin so that His righteousness is imputed to us based only on the substitutionary death of Christ. This is true for all of His own. Believing it does not make it true, **it is true**. To add any work of our own is not only to be ignorant of God’s righteousness but is to make void the sacrifice of Christ. What grace, what rest, just to submit to the righteousness of God.

To trust Him is to know the peace and rest He has accomplished for us in Christ:

Joh 14:27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

Ro 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

Php 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Col 1:20-22 And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight:

Rom 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall the many be made righteous.

Rom 5:8-9 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

Rom 6:11 reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

ARC
Riverside Bible Church