

God's Righteousness Manifested

My teaching is tailored to the audience in Spring Valley Bible Church. Many of you are growing and some are perhaps mature believers. I do not spend much time on basics. However, I may start to include a rationale for some of the teaching. Why is this doctrine or that doctrine important for you to know?

One of the reasons for teaching doctrine is to help prevent the believer from becoming confused by what the Bible calls "false teachers." Today, there are many. Some emphasize emotion. Doctrine can stabilize the believer. Someone who understands who they are in their relationship with God is not swayed by the latest fad in feel good theology. Some emphasize changing the world. The Bible is focused on the spiritual world and the interaction with the physical world.

One of the doctrines that is vital to our understanding of Christianity is resurrection. Paul himself makes the case in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 that without the resurrection of Jesus Christ our faith is useless. If there is no resurrection, then the answer to what happens when we die is left unanswered.

1 Corinthians 15:13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised;

1 Corinthians 15:14 and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain.

So right there, Paul himself says this is a very important doctrine to understand and believe.

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In the book of Romans, a central topic is the gospel. If you give the good news of faith in Jesus Christ, you have to understand that sin should be mentioned, but sin is not the issue for an unbeliever. The penalty for sin was judged at the cross. The issue is faith in Jesus Christ which gives us, among many other things, the imputed righteousness of God and everlasting life.

What about the doctrine of eternal security? If you think you can lose your salvation by committing some sin, then you will be constantly avoiding a list of sins that the Catholic Church calls mortal sins. It could destroy your effectiveness as a believer. Eternal security is not a license to sin. It provides stability for the believer to serve.

The point is, each doctrine is important to a believer. Doctrine can provide assurance and encouragement in your Christian life. Doctrine can protect you from those who would seek to cause you to falter in your Christian life.

But always remember, doctrine alone will not cut it. Only doctrine/promises plus faith move you forward in your Christian life.

Hebrews 4:1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

Hebrews 4:2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word [hey heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

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Romans 3:21 But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

Before moving forward, let us look back at where we have been in the book of Romans. We are in the middle of an argument Paul is making that all have sinned and need to turn to faith to obtain God's imputed righteousness.

From my perspective, Romans 1:16-17 is the introduction and overview of this argument. The first part of the argument identifies immoral degeneracy (Romans 1:18-32). Then starting in Romans 2:1-4 Paul makes the case against moral degeneracy. He proceeds to include Jews and their dependence on heritage and possession of the Mosaic Law. He concludes the first part of his argument saying that the whole world is accountable to God.

Romans 3:19 Now 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;

Romans 3:20 because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.

As stated last week, the whole world is accountable because if the Mosaic Law, which is perfect, cannot save because it is "works" then nothing less can save either because it is "works." The only solution is faith in Jesus Christ. That is where we are going in Romans.

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Now, starting in Romans 3:21 Paul provides the rationale for faith. Below I put together a chart showing Romans 1:16-17 as the “overview.” Then on the left I have included key verses identifying the degeneracies and false reliance on heritage and Law. On the right is the start of the solution.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of **the gospel**, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who **believes**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:17 For in it the **righteousness of God is revealed** from faith to faith; as it is written, “But the **righteous man** shall live by faith.”

Romans 1:18 For the **wrath of God is revealed** from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 1:32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Romans 2:1 Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

Romans 3:21 But now apart from the Law the **righteousness of God has been manifested**, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

Romans 3:22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those [l]who believe; for there is no distinction;

Romans 3:23 for all [m]have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

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In the introduction to the argument, Romans 1:16-17, the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel. The gospel, the topic of Romans, includes both what Herman calls Salvation 1 and Salvation 2. Initially, in this part of Romans, Paul is dealing primarily with the unbeliever and his salvation. Some call Salvation 1, Salvation phase 1 or justification. There are many facets to salvation. As taught last week, sin is taken care of at the cross. An unbeliever cannot stop sinning and cannot earn salvation. But the sin penalty had to be paid. That was done by the perfect person, Jesus Christ. It is included in the doctrine of redemption. But, in order to have continued everlasting fellowship with God it is necessary for a person to have both life and righteousness. Those are given by God at the point of salvation. Paul picked just one, righteousness to deal with. It is a complex issue to convince an unbeliever for the need for righteousness on the one hand and then to explain how God provided this righteousness without perverting His righteousness.

What Paul did in the argument was to divide it into two parts: Romans 1:18-3:20, the negative part, man's need for God's righteousness and Romans 3:21-4:25 God's provision of His righteousness. Look at key words: Wrath of God in Romans 1:18 which is the result of mankind's sins. No one is worthy of God's righteousness; then the righteousness of God repeated in Romans 3:21 leads the way to God's solution through faith.

Notice that Paul has used a verb for revealed/manifested in each case. On the one hand, God revealed His wrath as a result of man's unrighteousness. On the right God manifested His righteousness.

But now. The Greek breaks the argument going from the wrath of God revealed against unrighteousness to the righteousness of God having been manifested. Previously there was no word for faith in the argument. All of a sudden in Romans chapter 3 starting in verse 22 Paul is

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addressing the solution to the wrath of God: faith. The Greek word for “now” is an adverb of time that is not always used for time. Here it function kind of like, “at this point in the argument we shift gears...”

Apart from the Law. The Law is obviously the Mosaic Law, the perfect Law which when performed does not provide salvation. It can provide for a society that has abundant life. It's purpose, as we have seen, does not include salvation, only the need for salvation from God among other things.

The Jew thought that the Mosaic Law and the covenants provided the Jew with an “in” with God. It only provided a front row seat to the need for salvation and a front row seat on the manifestation of that salvation in Jesus Christ. We saw last week that Paul used the Law as the “best” or “perfect” law. If this law cannot provide God's righteousness, then anything less can't either.

There are two other uses of “apart from the Law” used by Paul in Romans. We will get into those in due time. Paul continues to make the point that the Law is perfect and holy. It is essential for an understanding of sin. It is useless for salvation.

By providing salvation apart from the Law, God is avoiding the “work” aspect of the Mosaic Law. But it also makes salvation a universal. It is not something that belongs only to the Jew.

It is by faith that we are imputed God's righteousness. There is no divine righteousness in humans accomplishing the Law. But for the purposes that the Law was designed, it is absolutely essential. One of those purposes is that we have knowledge of sin. The Law is essential to lead to toward understanding our need for faith in God's solution.

Again and again, Paul shows the inability of the Law to provide the righteousness needed for salvation. But he has to come back to ensure the

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reader that the Law is not bad. It is perfect. But it was not designed to provide salvation. But it pointed to the future when God would provide a means of taking care of sins and providing the basis for faith both in the New Testament and the Old Testament. The Law included a “shadow” Christology pointing to the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Prophets which in this context may include the writings, also points to Jesus Christ both in predictive prophecy which Christ fulfilled as well as typological paradigms which Christ also fulfilled.

“The passage falls into four parts. In the first, Paul reiterates (f. 1:17) the revelation of God's righteousness and relates it to the OT (v. 21). The second section focuses on the way in which all human beings, equal in their sin, have equal access also to God's righteousness through faith (v. 22-23). The source of God's righteousness in the gracious provision of Christ as an atoning sacrifice is the theme of the third part of the passage (vv. 24-25a). Finally, Paul shows how the atonement not only provides for the justification of sinners but also demonstrates the "just-ness" of God throughout the process (vv. 25b-26). In making this last point, we are presuming that "righteousness of God," which refers in vv. 21-22 to the justifying act of God, refers in v. 25-26 to the "integrity" of God, his always acting in complete accordance with his own character.¹”

1. God's righteousness related to the Old Testament (2:21)
2. God's righteousness available through faith (2:22-23)
3. God's righteousness provided through Christ's atonement (2:24-25a)
4. God's righteousness declares the believer justified without perverting His character. (2:25-26)

¹ Moo, D.J. (1996). *The Epistle to the Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. Page 219.

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Being witnessed. Paul does not say “fulfilled,” but “witnessed.” At first, I thought this was peculiar. The Law and the Prophets prophesied Jesus’ birth, life, work on the cross and His death. I might have used the word fulfilled. John uses the same term through the words of Jesus:

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify (or witness) about Me;

Before prophecy is fulfilled we look at it and say it will be fulfilled. Once it is fulfilled, we usually say it has been fulfilled. But as John tells us, once fulfilled, the prophecy stands as a witness of what God said He would do and now has done. It is a witness to the righteous acts of God.

So, the Law and the Prophets stand as witnesses to God’s righteousness. God has provided righteousness which can be imputed to individuals based upon faith in Jesus Christ without perverting His character. Indeed, it is from His character that He can do this, no, that He must do this. That is who God is. The witness of the Old Testament was a term I had not comprehended until studying for this lesson.

“The Word of God is alive and powerful...” In one sense, it is like the Scriptures are a person. That person, the Word, is witness to what God has done and is doing.

Comparing now the words for “manifest” and revealed show us how they cooperate together to move Paul’s argument along.

In Romans 18:16-17 God’s righteousness is revealed. In Romans 1:18 God’s wrath is revealed. Same basic word. But in Romans 3:21 God’s righteousness is manifested. This word is similar. It is a synonym of revealed. And yet, Paul uses different words. Perhaps he is separating them for our benefit. On the one hand, God’s wrath is revealed throughout history against evil. But through Christ, God revealed His

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righteous endeavor to provide a solution to problems of man's own making.

Romans 3:22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Before we finish this morning, let us go back to the barrier between God and man. One of the items in that barrier is "sin." The "fix" for sin is Unlimited Atonement. Unlimited means "all." Jesus Christ died on the cross for all. Below are some passages from the Bible that indicate that. There are some, even conservatives, that contest that. They believe that Jesus Christ died only for people who would believe. These passages show that Christ did in fact die for "all."

2 Corinthians 5:14 For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

2 Corinthians 5:15 and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

1 Timothy 2:5 For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus,

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1 Timothy 2:6 who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time.

1 Timothy 4:10 For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

Titus 2:11 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men,

Titus 2:12 instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age,

Titus 2:13 looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus,

Titus 2:14 who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.

Hebrews 2:9 But we do see Him who was made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, so that

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by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

1 John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;

1 John 2:2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.