

I want to speak this evening on the **most important question** in the world? It is the question Job asked? *“How can a man be just/right with God?”* [Job 9:2]. If there is a God, as we believe there is, no other question can be as important as this! All of us at one time or another are challenged about the **existence** of God and our **relationship** to Him. We **all** wonder - and **fear** - is there a God who knows **absolutely everything** about me! This fear is because we **know** that every single one of us, have done wrong, we have **sinned**, we have broken the Law, the Law of God!

The Bible tells us, that God made man **upright, innocent, sinless** (in Adam) [Ecc 7:29] But **all** will agree that something has **gone wrong** with mankind! We are far from sinless! Many philosophers have said, ‘whatever man is, he is not what he was **meant** to be!’ What happened?

The Bible tells us what happened was this: We **disobeyed God**. We **broke His Law!** And that is what makes our **text** so **lovely** – there **is** a righteousness *“apart from law”*! Our text is stating that we can be righteous, before God, apart from law-keeping! It does not teach of course, that we are to **live** any kind of life without respect to law, but that we can be **accepted** by God **despite** the fact that we have **broken** God's law, times without number! We **can** have peace, real peace, with ourselves, others and God! Peace *“which surpasses all understanding”*! Augustine said, ‘Man is restless until he finds rest in Thee’!

Now this is where the Church comes in. The Church was **instituted** (by God) to **direct** us to a **sure** and **certain hope** of real peace which comes from being 'Right With God'! The Church's message was **not** to be **woolly** - but to give **certainty!** Remember what **Dr Luke** wrote? *“Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught”*! So it is **vitaly important** that we know for certain, exactly **how** we can be right with God!

Our text tells us three main things. (1) It tells us about a ‘righteousness’ that comes from God – so if it comes from God Himself, it must be **acceptable** to Him! And yet, it is *“apart from law”*! So here is the **answer** to man's religious quest! (2) It tells us **how** it can be **obtained?**

(3) It gives great **encouragement** to everyone – for it makes *“no difference”* whether you are Jew/Gentile, whether sinned little or much!

### A RIGHTEOUSNESS APART from LAW!

One can hardly speak on this subject (right with God - justification) without mentioning **Martin Luther** the RC monk! As a monk, he was constantly plagued that when he would stand before God in judgment, at the end of his life, he would be found **guilty**. He was desperate to be ‘right with God’. Despite all his efforts and all his discipline, he still felt and **knew** - he was a sinner. How **could** he pay for his sins? How **could** he be righteous before a **holy** God? He believed for a while that the **sacraments** would do it! But then he realised they didn't. He was still a sinner. Then he tried with all his might to comply with the **penitential system** of mediaeval Roman Catholicism. But the result was just the same, he **still had** a sinful nature, he still needed pardon, for he still sinned! Then one day, all of a sudden – while reading Paul's letter to the Romans, light shone into his heart! He became a changed man!

I have often wondered (and asked God) why do we not have people like that today? One reason: is we do not live in the same **culture** as Luther! The Mediaeval world and the RCs **believed in sin!** Luther lived in an atmosphere of 'Man Guilty Before God' – and the subsequent need for **forgiveness!** He was ‘brought up’ to realise the one great need of mankind was forgiveness – thus the RC emphasis on baptism, mass, confessional, indulgences, purgatory, last rites, etc – it is all to obtain forgiveness of sins! They believed in **sin!** Our generation, generally speaking, **do not** believe we have **all** sinned against **God!**

So this is what Luther discovered – a righteousness from God that actually forgave sin! And it was *“apart from law”*! Apart from ‘law-keeping’! This is what was such a **relief** to him – he did not need to spend hours praying, hours torturing himself! This was great news for the Romans also – because they prided themselves in knowing the law! Amazing what we have here: a **Jew** (Paul), who has **completely changed** his mind on law, writing to Romans about **their Specialised Subject (Law!)** (Who is going to believe him?) And yet, what Paul has written here, has become the **World's Best Seller** (Bible!) These verses of Paul are **historic** to say the least! They have been discussed more than perhaps any other law-book. Almost every civilised culture has studied

these words! It says we can be right with God “apart from law”! Apart from doing things perfectly!

You see, in **every culture and religion**, some ‘law’ or ‘laws’ are **essential** in order to be righteous. Ask anyone this question: ‘Who gets to heaven?’ and the reply will be ‘O not the murderers, child abusers, rapists – you have to be...?’ They will have some **standard** or **code of practice** which they believe is necessary before we get to heaven! Paul actually talked about both Jew and Gentile having standards of their own – and both failing! Look at [vv9,10] “*We already have made the charge that **Jews and Gentile alike** are **all** under sin. As it is written: **There is no one righteous, not even one**”!*

Now this 'righteousness of God' was **foretold** in Scripture “*to which the Law and the Prophets testify*”[26]! The Bible written 100s of years before Christ, **prophesied** of Christ’s coming and of His death! **X Himself is** this “*righteousness from God*”. Listen to this excellent **role and name** which the Apostle John gives Jesus Christ “*if anyone does sin, we have an **advocate** with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” [1J 2:1,2]. He calls Him ‘The Righteous One’ with the role of advocate!*

And Jesus came **from** God (& was God) and He lived a perfect sinless life – and died **in the place of**, as a **substitute for** His people. He represented them in His death which was **payment** for their sins! Ie, He **paid** for their sins! “*God presented Him as a sacrifice of atonement*” [25]! John added to his sentence re “*Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the **atonement sacrifice for our sins**” [1John 2:1,2]. Paul said about Christ “*God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that **in Him we** might become the **righteousness of God**” [2Cor 5:21]. There it is – Christ **is** “*the righteousness of God*” and being “*in Him*” is the answer!**

### **HOW CAN we OBTAIN this RIGHTEOUSNESS ie, 'IN CHRIST'?**

Our text “*This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ” [22]! By faith means by **believing/trusting** in Jesus. We are **united/joined** to Christ, through faith - **not** by doing things! Not by law-keeping! Paul said to the Jailer “**Believe** on the **Lord Jesus Christ** and you shall be **saved** and your house” [Acts 16:31].*

In the Bible, when Xnity began, there was a **big issue** in one Church, in Galatia, about law-keeping as the Jews did, and about Gentiles who did

not have the Law of God as Jews did! Some said you needed to be circumcised because that's what God said to the Jews! After getting Paul and the apostles to discuss the whole thing, this was the **conclusion**: “*We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is **not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ**. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be **justified by faith in Christ** and **not** by **observing the law, because by observing the law no-one will be justified**” [Gal 2:15,16]. What could be clearer?*

But what is it to believe? **Devils** believe – and tremble! Faith means **trusting!** Story of **Blondin, Tight Rope Walker!** Its putting **all your hope for salvation** in what Jesus did on the Cross!

Do you know what was the **one reason why** John wrote his gospel? “*But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that **by believing** you may have **life in His name**” [J 20]*

### **The ENCOURAGEMENT**

Can anyone believe and receive this eternal life? Must you be something ‘special’ first? Not at all! Look: It is “*to all (Jews, Gentiles, Brits, Americans, Irish, Chinese, Indians) who **believe**. There is **no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by His grace”!***[23,24]! You see it’s all by **grace!** It’s **free!** We can’t earn it or buy it! It’s not for sale. It is actually for the **desperate**, for those who are at the **end** of their **own resources** – it is for those who **have nothing** to offer anyway! You need to be **humble**. The **proud & self-righteous** won’t take it!

Everyone is **welcome** to Jesus Christ – no one is **excluded** – apart from those who **exclude themselves!** “*Everyone who **believes** that Jesus is the Christ is born of God*” [1J5:1]! + “*Christ is the end of the law so that there may be **righteousness for everyone who believes**” [Rom10:4] + “*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of **everyone who believes**: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile*” [1:16] + “*And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that **everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life**” [J6:40]**

The most popular verse in the Bible is “*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have **eternal life**” [John 3:16]!*