

Whose Righteousness?

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Bible Verse: Philippians 3:8-9
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Well, I invite you to turn to our text for this morning which will be taken from Philippians 3:8-11. This will actually be our text for today and also next Sunday but I want to read it together and we'll consider the first two verses here this morning. The Apostle Paul says in Philippians 3:8, he says,

8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

It's been a long time getting to this point in the book of Philippians for many many reasons, but today's text is the primary reason, or at least one of the primary reasons, that I wanted to teach through the book of Philippians here at Truth Community Church. I'm very grateful to the Lord that he's brought us to this point and I'm grateful that he's brought you here to be with us here this morning.

The Bible is preoccupied with a question that the world actually cares very little about, in fact, you could say that much of the church actually cares very little about. It's expressed in Job 25:4, for example, "How then can a man be right with God?" How is it that sinners can have a right standing with God that spares them his coming judgment? The book of Romans opens on this note when the Apostle Paul says in Romans 1:16, he says, "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. 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.'" How can a man be right with God? How can a woman be right with God? That is the question. You could ask the same question in a different way: how can a sinner be accepted in the presence of a holy God? It's vital for us to understand that this acceptance with a holy God is not automatic, the Bible does not teach a universal salvation by which all men go to heaven when they die, quite to the contrary, Jesus said the gate is narrow

that leads to life and there are few who find it. And in this day and age when people are preoccupied with everything other than this, it's a blessing from God that we're able to consider these things here today.

Why is it such a problem? Well, it's a problem because of sin. It's a problem that Scripture speaks about in language like that found in Isaiah 59:2 where it says, "your sins have made a separation between you and your God, "And your iniquities have hidden your face from Him so that He does not hear." There is a separation between sinners and a holy God that must be addressed, that must be found, and God requires righteousness to enter into his presence and the question is whose righteousness will he accept? Who will go to heaven? Who is it that is right with God?

Now for those who are truly in the family of God, to know the answer to this question is to have inestimable joy and peace and confidence for Scripture says if God is for us, who is against us, and yet by contrast, the Bible warns us of the preeminent place and importance of this question when it asks the question if we gain the whole world and forfeit our soul, what was the point? What does it profit a man to gain everything in this world and then to lose his soul? God requires righteousness to enter into his presence. All men are lost and unrighteous by nature and by birth, and so there is this pulsating tension that requires an answer to the question how can I be made right with God? Who is it that can be right with God? And what we find in this text is the answer to that question and that's why it's a text of such primary importance and reflects other texts in Scripture and parallels the thought of other places in Scripture where this matter is addressed.

How can you be right with God? That's the only question that matters. Nothing else matters by comparison. We will live this life, we will have our joys and our sorrows, if the Lord tarries we will die and in due time we'll all be forgotten, but the consequences of our life and the consequences of sin, righteousness and judgment will go on and echo throughout all of eternity. So I beg you, I ask you, I plead with the Holy Spirit as we gather here this morning to work in your hearts to elevate this question to a matter of great primary importance for you in your own mind, how can a man be right with God, how can I be right with God.

We could ask the question a different way: whose righteousness does God accept in order for a man to be right with him and to enter heaven when he dies? Well, we're going to look at this from two different perspectives and to start it out looking at Philippians 3:8 with me, and just picking up on the context of what we addressed on Tuesday night. We looked at this text in Philippians 3:4-7 where the Apostle Paul was talking about his preeminent advancement in Judaism before he was converted to Christ and he says that, "A man like me could have confidence in the flesh if he was so inclined," because he says there in verse 4, look at it there with me, he says, "I myself might have confidence even in the flesh." And then he talks about the privileges of birth and the privileges of choice that he had made that by all outward appearances would seem to make him a righteous man who had done what God required. He says there, "

4 ... I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

He says, "I have done what Judaism required and you could look at me as the preeminent example of what it can produce." But he gives a judgment on it and he rejects it as his conclusion there in verse 7, he says,

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

"Whatever I might have relied upon to establish my own personal righteousness, I consider it a debt, I consider it something that is actually against me rather than is in my asset column," and he says, "I've rejected it all so that I might be able to gain Christ."

Now in these next two verses, he explains what he means by that and he helps us understand what it is, whose righteousness it is that God accepts, and what it requires for a man or a woman like you to be right with God, and the answer, my friends, my answer is not what you would hear in the world at all, and it is not what men naturally think in their carnal pride and in their assumptions about who they are and who God is.

What does it require for a man to be right with God? Well, point 1 as we're going to see here this morning is this: it requires a rejection of your personal righteousness. It requires a rejection of your personal righteousness. What Paul is describing in this text is the pattern for every true believer and it gives us insight into what the nature of the righteousness is that God actually requires. So look at it there in verse 8 where Paul says, "More than that," in other words, with what I just said in verse 7, I've counted all things as loss for the sake of Christ, he's now going to go further in his assertion and he says, "More than that." Now this is actually profoundly emphatic in the Greek text and the emphatic feeling of it is hard to convey in the English language. He piles together five different Greek particles, I have them here in my notes but they won't mean much to most of you so I won't read them out here, but the combined sense of them is an emphatic with an exclamation point, "Indeed! Certainly! No question about it," in other words, as he is emphasizing what he had just said and coming along to expand it in what he is about to say. And what he is doing here is he is forcing us to think more deeply on his perspective. He said, "All of my righteousness I have counted as loss and now that I've said that, I want you to focus even more and I want you to give your attention, I want you to concentrate and meditate on this point far more deeply." So he's forcing us with this emphatic statement, "More than that," he is forcing us to think more deeply on the perspective that he's bringing to this and what his perspective is explaining to us is what the nature of true saving faith is actually like. It's not simply his Jewish past that Paul is rejecting. It's not simply his Jewish righteousness that he is utterly forsaking here. He is forsaking everything that might be considered as righteousness in himself.

Look at it there in verse 8 with me. He says, "More than that," he's going beyond what he just said about his Jewish past, he says, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." What he's rejecting here is everything that is produced by self, everything that he does, everything that he thinks, everything that might look like morality or righteousness in the sight of men horizontally. He rejects all of it and says, "I'm not trusting in any of that for my righteousness with God, in fact, I reject and forsake it all," he says. He is forsaking, you could put it this way, he is repenting of any tendency for pride in his own morality. This is a statement of utter, complete, unreserved, unqualified humility that he is making in his statement here. The pride in morality. Jews found it in their religion. People today find it in their acts of charity, especially now as they go by and drop a few coins in the Salvation Army bucket and feel good about themselves. Pride in appearance and outward senses of what men think about them. All of this, all of this which we tend to look at and to consider ourselves at least better than someone else or somehow God is acceptable, the good outweighs the bad in my life, all of that is to be rejected if you are going to have the righteousness that God requires.

Now for many people this is just a stunning stunning thought. If I reject my own righteousness, if I forsake everything good, supposedly, allegedly, so-called good about myself, "Then what is there for me? What then on what basis would God accept me, and besides that I think I'm pretty good as it is. I don't like this accusation that I am not acceptable before a holy God." Well, Paul when he says that, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value," the verb is in the present tense meaning, "This is my ongoing attitude toward it. This is the way that I have a settled way of thinking about it." And it shows his ongoing attitude toward the whole topic.

Now let me remind you as I like to do from time to time, that what we're reading here is the inspired word of God. This is God telling us about the righteousness that he requires. God is expressing his view on all human morality through the words of Christ's appointed apostle, Paul. God looks at it all and says, "Unacceptable. Deformed. Defiled. Unacceptable in My sight." And Paul is showing us this ongoing attitude toward the whole topic and look at how encompassing what he says is. He says, "More than that, I count all things to be loss." It's an accounting term, "I count it all as a debt in my column." And what he's doing is this and I don't want you to miss how comprehensive it is in its assertion, Paul takes anything and everything that might be considered as his own independent righteousness, that which would be considered a positive in the plus column of his life, and he says, "I cast it all out. I reject it. It's not a plus, it's a minus. It's not an asset, it's a liability to me compared to Christ." He is comparing his so-called righteousness with Christ and with Christ's righteousness and he sees the difference and it's the difference that you and I must see if we are to understand the true nature of true saving faith.

Jesus Christ is perfect. God is absolutely holy, without blemish, without sin, without impure thoughts. He has revealed his righteousness in his law specifically in the 10 Commandments and those 10 Commandments come to us and in their perfection they require from us – I need to slow down here and we've got a long way to go, I need to

keep some energy for later on, right? As we read in our Scripture reading earlier, the sum of the law is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself. The first four commandments expressing love for God, the last six commandments expressing that love in relationship to man, and it's an utter perfection and as we're going to see in a few months, it's an utterly unattainable standard. We must understand the holiness of God and the majesty of the law to understand that it condemns all of our righteousness; that our righteousness does not meet the lofty standard of the law; that our righteousness is not fit, our so-called righteousness is not fit for the holy presence of a God before whom Isaiah was deconstructed and he cried out, "Woe is me! I've seen God and I'm a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips." And the holiness of God crushed his own prophet. Well, then, what hope do the rest of us have? And what Paul is saying here is that in light of who Christ is, anything that I might think about as being an asset of morality, righteousness in my own column can't possibly measure up to the righteousness of Christ and therefore I reject it all.

Christ, my friends, Jesus Christ is superior and more excellent than the best that we would have to offer to him. He's infinitely superior to it all, and he's infinitely better than any of our own righteousness. To have him is far better than to have our own righteousness, and so what Paul says here, look at it there in verse 8 with me, he says, "I count all things about me to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. This is far better to know Christ than to claim my own righteousness." He says, "I've suffered the loss of all things." He's suffered as an apostle in his service to Christ and he takes all of the assets of personal morality, all of the sufferings that he had had as an apostle, and he casts it aside and says it's only so much rubbish compared to Christ.

And that word "rubbish" in the original language is very graphic. One lexicon translates it as "dung," as "manure," in other words. In any other context, this word being used would be a revolting, almost unmentionable word for human excrement. It joins Isaiah's picture of a menstrual cloth when he says, "All of our righteousnesses is like filthy rags in the presence of God." We react against the picture that Paul is using to describe how he assesses his own righteousness. Paul and the Bible react against the reality to which the picture points. The picture of excrement, the picture of a used menstrual cloth is giving us a picture of how God views human righteousness, and in God's eyes it is revolting, it is not sufficient, it must be cast away. And what Paul is saying is this – listen to me carefully and may the Holy Spirit help each one of us, O God, help us – Paul found the thought of his personal righteousness revolting when he compared it to the perfections of Jesus Christ. He found the idea of relying on his righteousness revolting compared to relying on the righteousness of Jesus Christ. So what he is doing here is this, and stay with the graphic picture because we're only drawing upon a picture that Scripture itself uses, otherwise we wouldn't talk this way: the body expels from itself that which is of no use. Paul expels from himself any claim to human righteousness so that Christ might be exalted in him. Paul says, "You see, you consider these bodily functions, it's revolting, right? Yes, it's revolting. Well, that's how I consider my own righteousness. I reject it and

I expel it from any reliance, any pride, counting it in any way as a measure upon which I might be made right with God."

It's not simply his Jewish past, he flings away everything of his own credit in exchange for Christ. In other words, he looks at the Lord Jesus Christ and he says, "Christ is far better, infinitely better than any of my own accomplishments." Extending the thought, Paul is saying – listen to me carefully. Please listen to me carefully. Here's what we are doing, metaphorically speaking here's a picture of what we are doing. There is life on earth and there is a gap and there is life in heaven, or you could say there is the present age and there is the future age, and what you and I are doing right now, what we are talking about in a word picture is we are hanging over the gap between the present age and the future age and everything hangs in the balance as to what will happen to you and what will happen to your soul in how you receive and how you respond to these things from God's word. It's no less important than that. This is of surpassing consequence. This is of eternal, everlasting, immeasurable consequence far beyond anything that we've dealt with in 2020.

So what Paul is saying here and what the Bible is telling us to do is that when judgment day comes and we anticipate judgment day in the present, what do we do with a coming judgment day? Paul says, "I'm counting on Christ, not on myself. I throw away everything about self-righteousness, I repent of it and I forsake it so that I might have Christ instead." What exactly is he saying? Well, he goes on and he expands it more in verse 9 and you can see it laid out specifically here as he drops the word picture and speaks about it in the reality, speaks directly about the reality. He says, "I want to gain Christ. I want to be found in Him." Look at it there, I ask each one of you to look at the text of the Bible that you have in front of you and see how critical this statement is. He says, "I want to be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law." When it comes to being in the presence of God, I want to be found in Christ and I do not want to rely on a righteousness of my own. I am not counting on my obedience to the law of God as being that basis upon which God would accept me and receive me and count me as righteous in his sight. I don't rely on that. Everything about human obedience I forsake as being tainted, as being poisoned, as being unacceptable before a holy God. Everything about my external appearance of obedience, I reject that I am not relying on that, I'm not counting on it, I'm not trusting in that. He has made a personal, conscious rejection of everything righteous about himself as he answers the question whose righteousness will it be? He's stating as plainly as possible that salvation is not based on human obedience to God's law. It could not be because our obedience is broken, it's flawed, it's sinful, it is not good enough. Our obedience is not good enough. So my friend, you do not go to heaven and you cannot go to heaven because you are good enough. You must stop thinking that way and repent of it and I say repent, forsake it because it is a product of a fallen, sinful mind that does not appreciate the infinite majesty of the holiness of God and has an entirely wrong perspective on human goodness in the presence of that holiness. You do not accumulate merit with your obedience. You can't do it.

Let's look at just a couple of verses that we've looked at often in the past. I want you to go to a couple of books back in your Bible to Galatians 2:16. This is the clear and consistent teaching of Scripture, that our works cannot save us and we must stop trusting in them and we must stop boasting in them if we are to be reconciled to God because we're separated otherwise. Galatians 2:16. He says it three times positive and negative in this one verse, "knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified." As it says in Romans 3, "there is none righteous, not even one; there is none who does good, there is not even one." In Ephesians 2:8 and 9 in that familiar text, Ephesians 2:8 and 9, it is "by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

You see, my friends, unless you have been under the sound of the Bible and under the sound of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, everything that you've been taught about going to heaven is wrong because you have been taught and conditioned to believe that if the good outweighs the bad, God will accept you. You have been taught to believe that sin isn't all that serious to God, he'll just kind of wave his hand and forget about it and everybody goes to a nice green place in the end, and it's not true. If it were true, Jesus would not have taught on hell the way that he did. He would not have taught us that hell is real, that hell is painful, and that hell is eternal. He would not have warned us about the broad way that leads to destruction. He wouldn't have done any of that because he wasn't bluffing and he wasn't lying. He was saying those things because they were all true and so this is a matter of great eternal consequence to everyone who comes under the sound of my voice, and no one under the sound of my voice is going to have an excuse, "No one told me." You're being told right now from God's word what the truth is. You cannot go to heaven by being good enough. You cannot accumulate merit with obedience because your sinful heart and your fallen condition can never produce the perfection that God requires, and even if, my friend, even if you could start being perfect today in heart, soul, mind and action, even if you could start today and be utterly perfect for the rest of your life, which you can't, but just say you could, well, what about the innumerable sins and iniquity that marked your past? What's going to happen to them? How is there an accounting for them?

So we come to God's word and we see that God's word tells us that human righteousness does not qualify for what God requires and that requires from you a personal recognition of that, an acknowledgment of that that says, "Whatever it is that God requires, I'm not going to rely on myself. I'm going to forsake all of that and I don't trust in anything that I've done, nothing that I've given, nothing that I've done, no prayers that I've prayed, no Communion that I've taken," go through all of the rituals, all of the human philanthropy that a person can do and forsake it all. Don't cling to any of it because we come to Christ, if we come to Christ at all, we come as those who are utterly bankrupt. "Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God," Jesus said. Well, you know what a bankrupt person is and the condition that they're in, right? They have a debt that they don't have the assets to pay. That's where each one of us is in our own merit before the holiness of God and the holy demands of his law. We have broken it. We have a debt that

is just continuing to billow up and we can't pay it, and we can't pay it if we lived 10,000 lives, it would just give us 10,000 more lives of guilt. We're utterly lost.

Now and so what we say is how can a man be right with God? Well, Paul starts by rejecting any sense of personal righteousness. Now that might sound very depressing and if you are inclined to trust in yourself and to boast in your own goodness, it is very depressing because the truth is telling your heart that, you know, your life is built on a lie. But understand this, my friends, is that this passage is not a hopeless passage that we read here. Paul is not speaking without hope here, he's simply talking about a hope that is not based in himself. It's based on something outside of himself. And so we repeat the question, we ask the question again: how can a man be right with God? How can a woman, how can a boy or a girl, how can they be right with God? Well, here's the answer, my friends. This is why we spent two years building up to come to this very text. It requires this, point 2: it requires a reliance on Christ's righteousness. It requires a reliance on Christ's righteousness.

The true Christian is someone who says, "I do not rely, I do not trust in my own works. I don't trust in the fact that I've been good enough. I don't trust in the fact that I've avoided certain sins and therefore I'm comparatively better." No, none of that. None of that. Out on the suggestion. Leave the building, in other words. That thought is what I mean by that, that thought must leave the building because it has no place in Scripture. Instead of relying on our own righteousness, we rely on the righteousness of Christ and on that alone. Salvation depends entirely and exclusively upon something else. Salvation depends entirely and exclusively on something other than your righteousness. We've got to put that out. We've got to put that in the garbage can where it belongs and take it to the curb and leave it for someone else to carry away, then walk back and say, "Okay, well, what is it then? I'm broken. I'm empty. I have nothing to offer God in my own hands. I can't buy His favor with money. I can't buy it with my works. I'm lost. I'm bankrupt. What now?" And Scripture comes to fill that void in a wonderful magnificent way by which God gets all of the glory and him alone.

Look at it here in verse 9 with me. Notice the contrast before and after, you might say. Not this, but this. He says, "not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but," but, that blessed word, God introduces a contrast that provides what man cannot do. Christ has provided in his own person that which man cannot provide on his own. The contrast "but" reminds me of the passage – we're going to go on a little tangent here which is just fine, anything to make this clear is what we're asking the Spirit of God to do for us – the contrast between the guilt of man and the righteousness and grace of God you see in Ephesians 2. Go back there with me again. Ephesians 2:1, "you were dead in your trespasses and sins." We've been using the metaphor "bankruptcy," Scripture also describes it as a condition of death. No life. No hope. No movement. Nothing there. "You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind," what was the outcome of all of that? "By nature we were children of wrath, even as the rest." We were

all like this. I'm not speaking from a point of spiritual or moral superiority here, this is a condemnation that falls on all of us, all of us dead in trespasses and sin, all of us bankrupt, all of us having no righteousness to offer God by which he would accept us into his holy presence.

Then why are we here? Verse 4, the contrast, that glorious word, that three word contrast "but." But God, but God has done something that we could not do. God has acted in our spiritual death, in our spiritual bankruptcy, in our spiritual ignorance. "God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)." Do you see the contrast? You were dead in trespasses and sins but God... You were a child of wrath but God... You could do nothing for yourself but God did something for you that you did not deserve. That contrast is the same kind of contrast that Paul is bringing out as we turn back to Philippians 3:9. Philippians 3:9. This is the most important thing in the universe for men. Nothing exceeds this in importance.

How can a man be right with God? How can a man stand before God in judgment and come out safe on the other side, is another way to say it. And Paul says, Paul is answering that question in a different way here, not in a different sense, a different content, he's just using a different picture to describe the same reality from Romans, Ephesians, Galatians. He says here in verse 9, he sets up the contrast, "not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but.." There's a way to have a righteousness that God accepts but it's not through anything that you've done. What is it then? It's "that which is through faith in Christ." You see, Scripture says that there is a way to find righteousness with God, a righteousness that God accepts, but it's a righteousness that does not come from that which we produce in our own selves. It's not a righteousness that finds its source in us. It's a source that is outside of us. It is a source that comes from God, not from within, from outside of earth instead of in this earthly life.

What this phrase means and what this phrase tells us is this, the righteousness which comes from God means this – listen to me carefully – God requires something that is beyond and apart from human effort. The righteousness that God requires is something that only God gives and that only God can give. We can't attain to it. We can't attain to infinite righteousness. We can't attain to infinite holiness anymore than we could be at the bottom of the Grand Canyon and jump up on top of it. Anymore than we could stand on the beach in Santa Monica, CA and jump to Japan. You can't do it and there's no need to even try. The righteousness that God requires is something that only he can give. The righteousness that God requires, my friends, watch this, is the very righteousness of Christ himself. Jesus Christ who is God Incarnate, who is eternally the second person of the Trinity, who is full deity and has all of the perfections of God because he is God, that is the righteousness that God requires. It can't be attained by human effort but it can be received in a different way, and it is the righteousness of Christ that God demands.

Look over at 1 Corinthians, another letter from Paul, 1 Corinthians after the book of Romans, 1 Corinthians 1:30. He says in verse 29, "no man may boast before God." Verse 30, "But by His doing." Do you see the contrast again? Again and again and again we see

this set up by contrast. This is not about human boasting. This is not about human works. It's about something else. "But," by way of contrast, by way of obedience that leads to boasting? No, not there but by something else. "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who," meaning Christ, Christ "became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.'"

Why does it have to be this way? Why does it have to be this way? Well, you can trace it all the way back to Adam and the fall of humanity in the garden of Eden, but just accelerating it to the front here, God's law requires a perfect obedience from man and we can't do it. God's law not only requires perfect obedience, it also condemns us for our sin and pronounces judgment on us. And so there's this perfection of positive obedience, we can't meet it. There's this judgment and declaration of condemnation upon our sins, and we're all there for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And what does Scripture say about those who sin? Well, Ezekiel 18, "The soul who sins will die." Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death."

Friends, this is a profoundly serious problem. On the one hand, the law demands that we keep all of its commands both in their positive and negative forms, on the other hand, it condemns us for every sin and leaves us without hope. The law can show us what to do, it's enough to condemn us, but it doesn't give us the power to obey and it doesn't do anything that would provide forgiveness for us either. We can't obey more in order to be forgiven of what we've done in the past. It doesn't work that way. And so what we find, there's something grievous about this as we build up to the hope that is in Christ, there's something grievous about this, about being in humanity, about being a human. There's something profoundly grievous about all of this as we look at things from the perspective of the one true God. The law demands that we keep everything perfectly, Jesus said, "You must be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect," Matthew 5:48. On the other hand, it condemns us for every sin. And those twin demands of the law are beyond us. We can't do it on our own.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones said this and I'm going to quote him somewhat at length. "The Gospel shows us how at one end the same time we can fulfill the demands of the law and God can accept us without violating His own justice. Something must happen that delivers me from the penalty, something must come into my possession that fulfills it, and it is all made possible for me in Christ. He was innocent, pure, and absolutely righteous. The law could not find a single blemish in Him. But He deliberately took our sins upon Himself, God punished our sins there in His body on the tree, God made Him responsible for our penalty." What's all this mean and what does it have to do with the answer to the question whose righteousness? Well, friends, there is one human in all of the universe who has fulfilled the righteousness that God requires and it's the God-man Jesus Christ. There is one person who has borne the penalty of human sin in a way that satisfies the demands of God for justice for the violations of his eternal holy law and it's found in Christ and he did it at the cross. In the life of Jesus Christ, the righteous demands of the law were satisfied. He met everything it required without a single

blemish. Also in Christ, in addition to the positive demands being fulfilled, the penalty of the law is satisfied through his death on the cross. He paid it as our substitute.

So the glorious message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is this: you and I have no righteousness to give God and we're lost in that condition, but God accepts the righteousness of Christ on behalf of everyone who believes in him. You are given a gift in salvation that you could never attain on your own, perfect obedience credited to your account in Christ, the penalty that the law requires of eternal condemnation for your sin paid in Christ, paid in full. "It is finished," Christ said on the cross. And so we have no righteousness to give God but he accepts the righteousness of Christ on our behalf. That is exactly what Paul is saying in this passage.

Look at verse 9 with me again, "a righteousness which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith." Do you see the word "faith" there twice? It's not about obedience to the law, it's about faith in Christ by contrast. This faith in Christ, God tells you, tells the sinner that in Christ he will give a righteousness to him immediately and just as you are. God justifies the ungodly who come to Christ in faith.

Let me back up and just come back to where I introduced and started the message just for a minute, okay? There's a lot of profound truth and theology wrapped up in everything that we're saying here today. I recognize that this is not important to the world. I don't care about that, I just acknowledge the fact that the world doesn't care anything about this but you and I need to care about it because this is what God has revealed as the only way to survive his coming judgment. This is important to God and because we're all going to stand before God one day at his throne and give an account for our lives, it ought to be important to every one of us, to understand and to grapple with these things and understand what they are saying about the state of our souls.

So Paul is talking about these things that are of surpassing supreme importance to God as he looks down upon humanity, and where is this righteousness that God accepts? Verse 9, it's that which is through faith in Christ, it is the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith. In your guilt, God will accept you precisely as he accepts Christ himself, and that gift is something that you must receive on the basis of faith, not on personal merit. Faith in Christ and personal merit are mutually exclusive. It's not that I trust Christ and I also try to be a good person and joining those two things together, God accepts me. No, no, no, no, no, no. Stop. Stop. Stop. Don't think that way because that's not right. If it was on the basis of works, then the Bible says Christ died needlessly, there was no point for him to die if you could contribute with your own obedience and righteousness. So instead of seeking something that you can earn, Scripture says you must receive it on the basis of faith, a faith that believes what God says in the word about Christ, a faith that believes that Christ, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ crucified, resurrected, and ascended into heaven, that that Christ is God's gift for our salvation, and you receive that by faith.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What is faith?" If it's received on the basis of faith, that becomes a pretty important question. "Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered to us in the Gospel." Let me summarize that as succinctly as I know how to without compromising the content. You reject your own righteousness. You utterly forsake it. You are forever a humble person saying, "I have nothing before God. I am a broken ruined sinner." And so you reject your own righteousness and by contrast you receive Christ. You rest on Christ. In other words, you trust that nothing else but Christ for your righteousness before God. Even my faith is not an act of righteousness, it's simply the means that God has appointed by which I receive this gift from outside myself.

And here's the good news: when you receive Christ like that, confessing your sin, trusting in him, all of your failure to obey God's law is no longer held against you. All of the impossibility of its demands have been met on your behalf. When you believe or, my Christian friend, when you believed in Jesus Christ, everything that is true of Christ in God's sight now becomes true of you in his sight. The Scripture describes it as a union with Christ. You are brought together in a vital union with him where God looks at you through the eyes of Christ and everything that Christ did is counted for your benefit. All of his obedience credited to your account. His death paying sacrifice on the cross covering all of your sins so that the righteousness of Christ is the basis on which God accepts you. God forgives you from your violations of the law and utterly, completely, totally releases you from its penalty and in place of the judgment that you deserved, God gives you eternal life as the reward of the obedience of Christ. It's what Christ has done on your behalf. It's what he has accomplished for you. And you see in this, my friends, you see how great the grace of God is, you see how great the love of Jesus Christ for his people is, that though we were rebels and sinners and guilty before him, he stepped into the world, he stepped into time and he lived this perfect life, he died that miserable, eternally suffering death on the cross so that he could cloak you with that which was his and that you did not earn on your own, and as a gift he could cover you in his righteousness that you might be received and accepted by a holy God. God not only regards the believer as someone who is free from guilt, he regards us as those who have kept the law fully and perfectly because Christ did and we are joined to Christ, and what Christ did is credited to our account. And so the righteousness, the merit of Christ is now assigned to you as a free gift by a holy God.

So the question becomes this: whose righteousness are you trusting? Whose righteousness will you trust? Your own? The Bible says that's dung not only because it's not worthy of God, reliance on it hinders you from coming to Christ. Or will you trust in Christ's righteousness by faith? Have you rejected your righteousness and are you relying on the righteousness of Christ alone? Scripture says those who receive Christ have a gift of surpassing value that can never be taken away. The 19th century theologian, Horatius Bonar, said it like this. I ask you to bow as we close with this. "Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die, another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity."

Father, take what You have displayed in Your word and apply it to each heart. May there be no one walking out of this room who is trusting in their own righteousness but rather

rejecting that, repenting of it, and relying solely on the righteousness of Christ as it's offered to us in the Gospel. Christ crucified, Christ buried, Christ resurrected for the sins of his people. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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