

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

In the development of the gospel of Grace, Paul mentions justification (Rom. 3:24), he mentions redemption (Rom. 3:24) and he mentions propitiation (Rom. 3:25). But if we look carefully at the context he mentions multiple times “the righteousness of God” (Rom. 3:21, 22, 25, 26).

Clearly a critical theme of God’s grace is God’s righteousness. It is connected to justification, redemption and propitiation and frankly it is connected to every grace doctrine in the Bible.

There are some key observations we want to make about the righteousness of God:

Observation #1 - The righteousness of God is God’s righteousness.

The righteousness of God is revealed in the Word of God. That is where we learn about it. God is totally righteous in His character. There are two ways God’s righteousness may be seen:

(Way #1) - God’s righteousness may be seen in all God’s Person. I Sam. 2:2; James 1:17;
I John 1:5

God has a majestic holiness and righteousness that makes Him totally and completely separate from all creation. All are far short of this righteousness - Ex. 15:11; Ps. 99:9; 111:9; Is. 57:15a; Rev. 15:4.

(Way #2) - God’s righteousness may be seen in all God’s ways and works.

God always does what is righteous and right (Psalm 145:17). It is impossible for God to do anything that is not righteous (James 1:13). We may not understand exactly what God is doing or permitting, but we may know this with certainty, His ways and works are always righteous.

Observation #2 - The righteousness of God is revealed and manifested. **Rom. 1:17; Rom. 3:21**

There are four ways God reveals and manifests His righteousness:

(Way #1) - He reveals and manifests His righteousness by His wrath against unrighteousness.

One way the righteousness of God is revealed is by wrath that is poured out against unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18). Several passages reveal this truth – Psalm 7:9-17; Daniel 9:14; Revelation 19:1-6.

(Way #2) - He reveals and manifests His righteousness in the deliverance of His people.

Several passages bring out this fact. I Samuel 12:6-11; Psalm 9:7-9; 51:14; Is. 46:13

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(Way #3) - He reveals and manifests His righteousness by Jesus Christ.

The righteousness of God has been manifested by the Person of Jesus Christ. He is the fulfillment of the righteousness of God and fulfills both the law and the prophets (Rom. 3:21-22).

(Way #4) - He reveals and manifests His righteousness through a non-works faith only salvation. Romans 3:22, 26

God actually demonstrates His righteousness in saving people by faith and not works. A non-works salvation or justification actually demonstrates that no man has or may earn God's righteousness.

Observation #3 - The righteousness of God is something no man has on this earth.

Many passages of Scripture make this point very clear: I Kings 8:46; Psalm 14:3; Psalm 130:3; Psalm 143:2; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Rom. 3:10, 20; Gal. 2:16

Observation #4 - The righteousness of God in grace is forensic and legal and imputed gift of God that may only come by faith in Jesus Christ.

Now there is absolutely no question that God wants us to develop in holiness and righteousness. Paul, in fact, challenged believers to stop sinning and live righteous lives (I Cor. 15:34). God has not saved us to pursue unrighteous things (I Thess. 4:7; II Tim. 2:19). He wants us to become holy, transformed people (Rom. 12:1-2; II Cor. 6:17-18).

However, the key to understanding the righteousness of God, as it relates to the grace gospel, is to realize that righteousness has a forensic and legal side to it. Since no man has the righteousness of God, then how could one be righteous to the point that God would save?

This is why righteousness must be a legal and forensic imputed righteousness. This righteousness cannot be earned by any works or any attempt to keep the O.T. law. It must be imputed. It must be judicially calculated to one's account, which is only possible by faith in Jesus Christ.

- 1) Romans 1:17 - Righteousness that brings life is by faith.
- 2) Romans 3:21-26 - No possibility of righteousness of God through O.T. law or works.
- 3) Romans 10:3 - People who do not understand the righteousness of God try to invent their own.
- 4) II Corinthians 5:21 - God judicially calculated Jesus Christ as being sin so He could calculate us with His righteousness.
- 5) Philippians 3:2-9 - This passage could not be any clearer and it does show the forensic side of the righteousness of God in a non-works, non-merited, imputed righteousness that only comes through faith in Jesus Christ.