

Our Daily Homily - Romans

by F.B. Meyer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of faith in understanding the righteousness of God and receiving abundance of grace.

Scripture: Romans 1:17, Romans 2:15, Romans 3:26, Romans 4:20, Romans 5:17, Romans 6:13, Romans 7:24, Romans 8:26, Romans 10:9, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Righteousness", "Justification and Sanctification"

Description

F.B. Meyer emphasizes the profound significance of righteousness as revealed in Romans, explaining that it encompasses both our standing before God and our personal character. He distinguishes between forgiveness and justification, asserting that through Christ's finished work, believers are declared righteous and can claim the law's protection. Meyer highlights the role of conscience as God's judgment-seat within us and the necessity of yielding ourselves to God for true deliverance from sin. He encourages believers to feed their faith on God's promises and to present their bodies as living sacrifices, ultimately leading to a life of victory and service in Christ. The sermon concludes with a call to embrace the grace of God and the importance of unity in the body of Christ.

Transcript

Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith - Romans 1:17

It is important to understand this verse, because it is the key to the Epistle. In the deepest sense, righteousness stands for two things--first, our standing before God; and next, our personal character--our position and our condition--what we are in Jesus, and what we are in ourselves by the Holy Spirit. Hooker, therefore, well expresses the truth when he says, "The righteousness with which we shall be clothed in the world to come, is both perfect and inherent; that wherewith we are justified is perfect, but not inherent; that by which we are sanctified is inherent, but not perfect." The term righteousness, therefore, covers justification and sanctification, whereof the former is treated in the first five chapters of this Epistle; and to this we confine ourselves.

There is a difference between forgiveness and justification. By forgiveness the sinner may be reinstated in the confidence of Him whom he has wronged; by justification he is declared righteous according to law, and thereby commended to the confidence and respect of all men.

Justification is our position through the wonderful grace of God, and by virtue of the finished work of Christ, which is imputed to all who believe. All that He is, is reckoned to us who are in Him. We are not merely forgiven, great and wonderful as that act of love and grace would be; but we are dealt with as though we had never sinned. Instead, therefore, of the law being against us, as we deserve, it is on our side, defending and protecting us. Our salvation actually rests on law. We may claim it as an absolute right. And all this because of God's infinite grace: because, in the person of Jesus, He has perfectly met, and satisfied, the claims of His holy but broken law.

...shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness - Romans 2:15

This is a great announcement, and shows how God can judge men who have never heard of the Bible or the Decalogue. The latter is engraven on their hearts, and is witnessed to by conscience.

Conscience is an original faculty. We are no more called upon to investigate its origin than the mathematician to inquire how the mind can add, or multiply, or divide; or than the artist to ask why we can appreciate the beautiful. It is part of the make-up and constitution of our moral nature. The word ought lies behind conscience, investing it with the certainty and irresistibility of the throne of God.

Conscience is the judgment-seat of God set up within our nature. You may always know when conscience speaks. She never hesitates, or questions, or pronounces on the expediency of a course; but, as any case is presented to her, she pronounces absolutely and directly upon it as right or wrong. And as she speaks, she anticipates the verdict of the great white throne.

Doubtless conscience may be impaired in its action by long neglect, or by the determined preference of human maxims as our rule of action; but it is always liable to resurrection when the voice of God is sounding. The office of the minister, like "Old Mortality" in the story, is to go through the world, chisel in hand, clearing the inscriptions of the law from the grit of growth which has rendered them almost illegible in too many cases. The Prince, in the old fairy story, sounded a blast at the gate of the Sleeping Palace, and broke the spell, so that all its inmates sprang up into alert vitality; and similarly the Spirit of God, through the Truth, appeals to the human conscience, which is His ally in the heart of man.

That he might be just, and the justifier - Romans 3:26

This verse is often quoted as though the word yet must be inserted to bring out its meaning. "Just, and yet the Justifier." The marvel of a just God justifying sinful men is thus strongly accentuated. Of course, this is a true thought and marvellous. But it is not the precise idea of the apostle, when he says that the just God is the Justifier of those that have faith in Jesus. He means that the very justice of God has come on our side, and that His love may have its unhindered way, not only consistently with His justice, but because of it.

This is the heart of the Gospel. Jesus has stood as our representative. He has borne our sin, in its curse and penalty; has met the claims of a broken law, and satisfied the demands of infinite righteousness. To have done this in our name and on our behalf not only makes us free from any penalty which might otherwise have accrued, but gives us a claim--the claim of the righteous--on all those blessings which the righteous government of God has to bestow.

Directly we become one with Jesus by a living faith, we stand possessed of all that He has done and is. In Him we have already suffered all that the holy law of God could demand as the just penalty of our sins. In

Him we have laid in the grave, paying the uttermost farthing that could be exacted. In Him we have been liberated from the prison-house, and have passed into the presence and welcome of God. We may claim, therefore, that the law of God should make for us, as once it made against us. We are saved not only by the grace, but by the justice of God. He is faithful to His Son and just to the law, when He forgives us our sins.

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief - Romans 4:20

It was a marvellous promise that this childless pair should have a child, and become progenitors of a great nation, so that the stars of the heavenly vault and the sand-grains on the ocean-shore should not be more numerous. And it was enough to stagger any man to be told of it. But Abraham staggered not. How was this?

It did not arise from ignoring the difficulties that obstructed its realization.--He might have done so. Whenever the natural obstacles arose in his mind, he might have ignored them. But this, according to the R. V. rendering of the previous verse, was not Abraham's policy. He quietly and deliberately considered the enormous difficulties that lay in the path of the Divine purpose, and in spite of them "he staggered not."

But his unstaggering faith arose from his great thoughts of Him who had promised.--He kept saying to himself, He is able, He is able. He knew that God would not have said what He could not perform. He knew that the God of nature was Lord of the nature He had made. He knew that no word of the Almighty could be destitute of power. He fed his faith by cherishing lofty and profound thoughts of God's infinite resources. There rang in his heart the assurance, I am E1 Shaddai.

It is remarkable that, throughout Abraham's life, God was continually giving new glimpses into His own glorious nature. With every temptation, call to obedience, or demand for sacrifice, a new and deeper revelation was entwined. This fed his faith, and gave it unstaggering strength. Child of God, feed thy faith on Promise. For every look at your difficulties, take ten at what thy God is.

They which receive abundance of grace ... shall reign in life - Romans 5:17

All God's dealings with us are on the same principle. As we received Christ Jesus the Lord, so we must walk in Him. Whether it be justification or sanctification; whether reconciliation or reigning in life that is under consideration--the same mighty principles underlie and control the Divine gifts and our participation in them. We receive reconciliation as a gift at the beginning of our Christian life, and we have to receive all else by the same medium to the end. Forever and forever we have just to wait till God fill us, as the flower-cups that are now filled with sunshine and now with dew or rain.

You have already received the reconciliation (Romans 5:11).--Unable to earn it by your own endeavors, you were at last content to receive it as a free gift placed into your open hand; now you have to maintain the same position with respect to all the spiritual gifts that you need for the maintenance of a godly life, and to enable you to reign. Faith--simple, open-handed, heaven-regarding faith--is the one unchanging law of the holy life.

"Trusting Jesus, that is all."

This reigning in life is not to be relegated to the unseen and future.--It is meant to be our present experience. He hath made us kings to God, even the Father. We are called to the royalty of men, the abundance, the freedom, the consciousness of power and victory, which we are wont to associate with those who reign.

To reign in the ordinary life of the home, the shop, the counting-house--such is our high calling in Christ Jesus. And it may be ours if we receive "abundance of grace" of the one Man, Jesus Christ.

Yield yourselves unto God - Romans 6:13

We must choose. On the one hand stands sin, filling the market-place with its appeals, and bidding for us; on the other hand, God in the person of His Son. For it is well known that to whomsoever we yield ourselves to obey, his servants we shall be. Sin wants us, not only to work its fell results by us, but to curse and ruin us; whilst God wants to bless us with eternal life.

We may not be able to forecast or to arrange many things in our lives, which are difficult and perplexing; and at first it is not wise to discuss our attitude or action with respect to them. The first and most momentous question which presses for immediate solution is, whether we are prepared to present our members--brain, voice, hand, heart--to God; that through them He may fulfill His good purpose.

The argument is a very cogent one. The apostle tells us that we have been delivered from death; that in Jesus Christ we have been brought back to stand on the resurrection side of the grave. For such a wondrous deliverance, he exclaims, there is only one adequate return. Present yourselves to be the slaves of your Redeemer. Surely none of us would resemble the rich man, who was saved from drowning by a brave sailor, and offered him half-a-crown in recompense!

In this way also we shall be delivered from sin. Merely to resist and refuse it, is not enough; we shall not get perfect freedom so. But if we turn to God with a full purpose of heart, and give Him possession, we shall be delivered from the dominion of evil, because the responsibility of our emancipation and perfecting will rest on Him to whom we have yielded spirit, soul, and body.

O wretched man that I am! - Romans 7:24

This chapter is very full of the personal pronoun. Me and I are the pivot around which its argument revolves. The strenuous efforts which the soul makes, not so much to justify as to sanctify itself, to realize its ideal, to walk worthy of the Lord, are well-pleasing, and are described by a master hand.

Is there one of us who has not read these words repeatedly, and in desperation? They have been so exactly true. We have longed with passionate sincerity that a new man might arise in us to free us from our old man, and make us the men we fain would be. We have been conscious of a subtle force mastering our struggles, like the serpents overcoming Laocoon and his sons; we have realized that a corrupting carcass was bound to our backs, as to the Roman criminals of old, filling the air with miasma, and poisoning our life. We have cried bitterly, O wretched man, who shall deliver?

The key to the plaintive moan of this chapter consists in this. It is the result of the endeavor to live a holy life apart from the power of the indwelling Saviour, and independently of the grace of the Holy Spirit. All such efforts are sure to end in wretchedness. We can no more sanctify ourselves than we can justify. Deliverance from the power of sin is the gift of God's grace, as forgiveness is. And it is only when we have come to the very end of all our strivings and resolvings, and have abandoned ourselves to the Saviour, that He should do in us and for us what we cannot do for ourselves, that we are led to cry, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"All things are possible to God;

To Christ, the power of God in men,

To me, when I am all subdued,

When I, in Christ, am born again."

The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings - Romans 8:26

There is a threefold groaning here.

Creation groans (Romans 8:22).--The sufferings of the dumb animals, under the brutal tyranny of man; in hard service; in the torture chambers of vivisectionists; to yield pleasure; to give food; or to provide dress--must fill the ear of Heaven with groans. The sighs of myriads of acres, condemned to bear the poisonous poppy or the barley for the manufacture of spirit, must be heard across the broad expanse of space. There is a discord, an oppression, a vanity in the universe around us, which constantly betrays the secret oppression of evil. Goethe said that Nature seemed to him to be like a captive maiden crying aloud for release.

The saints groan (Romans 8:23).--We wait for our adoption, for the manifestation of our sonship, for the redemption of our bodies from the last remnants of the fall; and as we wait, we groan beneath the pressure of the present, the weight of mortality, and with eager desire for the blessed advent of the Lord.

The Spirit groans (Romans 8:26).--The pressure of sin and sorrow in our world is heavy for Him to bear, and He sighs bitterly, as Jesus did when He stood face to face with the grave of His dead friend.

But these groans portend life, not death. They are full of hope, not despair. They are the pangs of birth, not the throes of death. Out of the agony of the present the new heavens and earth are being born.

"Unto you is given

To watch for the coming of His feet

Who is the glory of our blessed Heaven.

The work and watching will be very sweet,

Even in an earthly home;

And in such an hour as you think not

He will come."

Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated - Romans 9:13

The apostle is dealing here, not with individuals as such, but with peoples and nations. For instance, Isaac stands for the entire Jewish race--Abraham's seed (Rom. 9: 7). He is dealing with the question, why it was that God chose Israel and rejected Edom; chose Jacob and rejected Esau: and he shows that the ultimate decision of their destinies lay in the purpose of God, according to election. The one was elect to be a channel of immense blessing to the world; whilst the other was rejected.

But we must always associate the Divine foreknowledge with the Divine choice. "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate." We must regard Jacob and Esau, not as individual personalities merely, but as the founders of nations. For God's purpose in the building-up of the chosen people, Jacob the methodical and farseeing, was more suited than Esau the free-lance, the rover, the child of impulse and passion. And, besides, there were religious aptitudes and capacities within him, of which Esau gave no sign or trace. This does not solve the entire mystery, perhaps; but only casts it a degree or two further back. Still, it ought to be considered. Like a candle, it casts a slender ray on to the black abyss. In any case, is it not certain that God's choice did alight on him who was most suited to serve the Divine purpose?

It may be that God is wanting to execute His purpose through you. Take heed. Still the savory dish steams on the desert air, and appeals to the appetite of our natures; and we are strongly tempted to forego the unseen and eternal for a moment's gratification. See to it that for one morsel of meat you do not sell your birthright.

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus - Romans 10:9

Salvation here is evidently to be taken in its most extended meaning. It stands even more for the deliverance of the soul from the love and dominion of sin than for the removal of its justly incurred penalty. That we should be pure in heart, holy in thought, consecrated in life, with all the range of our nature controlled by His indwelling Spirit--such is the Divine intention with respect to us, as suggested by this deep, great word Salvation. But there are two conditions, on our compliance with which this saving power is realized.

We must confess Jesus as Lord.--Throughout Scripture there is a close connection between Christ's Royalty and His Saviourship. "Behold, thy King cometh to thee, . . . having salvation;" "Him hath God set forth to be a Prince and a Saviour." "Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, . . . made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually." We shall never know Christ as a Saviour from inbred sin until we have definitely and absolutely enthroned Him in our hearts. A physician is not content with healing outbreaks of disease and fever when they occur; but claims leave to examine all the arrangements of the house, so as to deal with the sources of the mischief.

We must also steadfastly believe in the Resurrection.--The risen Lord, sitting at the right hand of God, in all the vigor of an indissoluble life: still working in the world, and energizing the hearts of His own: entering to indwell, to fill, to unite with His own eternal life--such is the vision offered to our faith. Let us look away to Him with a persistent, unwavering gaze, until sin ceases to attract us, and Satan finds a Stronger in possession.

Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things - Romans 11:36

This verse reminds us of those lagoons of perfectly still clear water, of which travellers tell. So clear, that it is easily possible to look into their translucent depths to where the submarine foliage waves! So deep, that the ordinary measuring line fails to plumb them! All these words are monosyllables. A child just learning to read could easily spell them out. But who shall exhaust their meaning?

Of Him.--The entire scheme of redemption; the marvellous history of the chosen people, with which this chapter is occupied; the universe of matter, all are included in the all things that have emanated out of God. No one has been His counsellor, or given ought to Him. from all created things, which are as the stream, let us climb to Him, who is their fountain, source, and origin; and in Him let us learn to fill our own

souls to the very brim.

Through Him.--Through Jesus Christ, the Mediator, God has poured the entire grace and wealth of His nature to bless and help us. There is no good thing that does not come to us through the mediation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. Through Him He made the worlds. Through Him we have received the reconciliation. Through Him, also, all grace is made to abound toward us. Never forget to magnify the Lord Jesus as the source of all your supply.

To Him.--Creation, Providence, Redemption, are all tending back to God. The tide is setting in toward the throne. A revenue of glory shall yet accrue from all that has happened within the parenthesis of time. Every whit in the great temple shall one day say "Glory!"

Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God - Romans 12:1

To present carries us back to Romans 6. We might almost say that the intervening chapters, after the manner of the apostle, are one prolonged digression or parenthesis, and that he classes all the great things with which he has been treating as among the mercies of God, and as reasons for our entire consecration. Every disclosure of God's grace toward us is an argument for our complete surrender to His will and power.

We are called on to present our bodies as instruments of righteousness, because all true regimen of the inner life immediately affects the body in all its members; and, conversely, the consecration of the body reacts upon and affects the temper of the soul. It would be well for you to take Miss Havergal's hymn, with its enumeration of the various parts of the body, and offer and present yourself, to be from this day and forward, wholly for God. Only believe that He is more anxious for this than words can tell, because He loves you so, and that He accepts immediately what you offer.

Such consecration must be living; that is, it must enter into all our life, being holy, well pleasing to God, and rational. It is not only reasonable when we consider the relation we sustain to Him, but it should engage all our intelligence and reasoning faculties. And when it is made, and the soul is becoming duly transfigured in its exercise, we begin to prove that God's will, which once we dreaded, is also good, well-pleasing, and perfect. When we look at God's will from a distance, and before consecration, it seems impossible. It is only when we begin to obey, that we can say:

"Thou sweet beloved will of God."

Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ - Romans 13:14

This verse is ever memorable from its association with the life of Augustine, who says: "Thus was I sick and tormented in mind, bitterly accusing myself, and rolling and turning about in my chain, till it might be wholly broken."

At length, rushing into the garden, groaning in spirit, "all my bones were crying out, soul-sick was I and grievously tormented. I said to myself, 'Be it done now; be it done now.' And a voice said, 'Why standest thou in thyself, and so standest not? Cast thyself upon Him. Fear not; He will not withdraw Himself, to let thee fall. He will receive, and will heal thee. Stop thine ears against those unclean members of thine, which are upon the earth, that they may be mortified.'"

Then arose a mighty tempest, bringing a heavy downpour of tears. "I cast myself under a certain fig-tree, and gave rein to my tears, and the floods of mine eyes brake forth. Why not now? Why not this hour make an end of my uncleanness? And, lo! from the neighboring house I heard a voice as of a boy or girl, I know not which, singing and oft repeating, 'Take and read; take and read!' Checking the torrent of my tears, I arose, interpreting it to be a Divine command to open the Book and read the first chapter I could find. I seized; I opened, and in silence read the passage on which mine eyes fell: 'Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.' No further would I read; nor was there need, for instantly all my heart was flooded with a light of peace, all the sadness of doubt melted away!"

For he that in these things serveth Christ [is] acceptable to God, and approved of men - Romans 14:18

Dean Howson renders this verse thus: "He who lives in these things as Christ's bondsman is well-pleasing to God, and cannot be condemned by men." There are two rules, therefore, to be observed by us when we consider our behavior in that great border-land which lies between the dark and light, the clearly wrong and clearly right. We are all conscious of habits and tastes, of inclinations toward certain forms of amusement and recreation, of methods of life, which do not contravene any distinct law of God, but are certainly open to question. It is such things that fall within the scope of these two principles.

First, we must always remember that we are Christ's bondservants.--Let us look then, every day and hour, and as to the mental habit, every moment, upon Jesus Christ as our Master. Saintly George Herbert chose that to be, as it were, his best-beloved aspect of his Saviour; "My Master, Jesus." "An oriental fragrance, my Master." Let us do the same. Let us wear the word next the heart, next the will; nay, let it sink into the very springs of both, deeper every day. And as each fresh question arises in our life, let us stand close besides Him, noticing the expression of His face, asking Him what He would desire, and always reckoning that the least suggestion of His preference is law. "None of us liveth to himself: for, whether we live, we live unto the Lord."

Second, we must always bear in mind the spiritual life of others.--We are to put no stumbling-block, or occasion for falling, in another's way. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor drink wine, nor to do any other thing, whereby our brother is made to stumble. Let us each of us please his neighbor for good ends, to build him up; for Christ pleased not Himself.

For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me - Romans 15:18

All things that have not sprung from the indwelling and inworking power of Christ, are probably valueless in the sight of God. As the apostle dared not record them in this book, so probably they are not recorded in God's book. They lack the one principle or germ of life. Our Lord said, Separate from Me ye can do nothing; and probably, therefore, whatever we do out of living union with Him amounts to nothing.

These words are a window into the apostle's inner life. He was ever looking to the Lord to work through him, in the power of the Holy Ghost. He had nothing, therefore, to boast of, as he reviewed his labors; the impulse in which they originated, and the success with which they were crowned, were alike attributable to the Son of God, who had been revealed and formed within.

Let us so yield ourselves to Him, that the great Master may fulfill through us also all the good pleasure of His will.

Let us wait before Him in earnest expectancy, till the foundation of His purpose begins to arise within us; and let us receive from Him the gracious power of which to realize His plans. "I cannot," one may say, "give that tract; speak to that fellow-traveller; witness for Christ on that ship or in that shop; stand up in that pulpit and preach." No, perhaps not. But you can let Christ do these things through you.

"So others shall,

Take patience, labor, to their heart and land,

from thy land. and thy heart and thy brave cheer,

And God's grace fructify through thee to all.

The least flower with a brimming cup may stand

And share its dewdrop with another near."

Quartus a brother - Romans 16:23

That is all we know about him. The others whose names are written here are more or less famous. Tertius wrote the Epistle; Gaius was evidently a man of influence; Erastus was the treasurer of the city, and so on. But Quartus was just a humble, simple Christian, who had no handle to his name, save his brotherliness and his desire to assure his Roman brethren, whom probably he had never seen, of his love to them. "So he begs a little corner in Paul's letter, and gets it; and there, in his little niche, like some statue of a forgotten saint scarce seen amidst the glories of a great cathedral, 'Quartus the brother' stands to all time."

What a lesson in humility! Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not. Be content to live and die unknown, except for the love that breathes through thy life, not to those of thine own circle merely, but for those across the sea, with whom thou wouldst fain strike hands. Thy one joy, that thou hast been born into the family of God. Thy creed, that all regenerate souls, of every name and sect, are members of the same family, children of the same Father, and therefore one in ties of peculiar tenderness and strength.

What a revelation this slight reference is to the new binding forces of the Gospel! At the Advent the world was split by great gulfs of national hatred; fierce enmities of race, language, and religion; wide separations far profounder than anything that we know. And then the Gospel came, which began to gather men of every race into one family, in Jesus Christ, the Divine Elder-brother; and from this, uniting influences of brotherhood began to permeate the world.

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