

The Righteousness of Faith - Part 3

by Roy Hession

Roy Hession's sermon emphasizes that true righteousness comes through faith in Jesus Christ, not through adherence to the law or personal works.

Duration: 47:57

Scripture: Numbers 23:21, Matthew 6:33, Romans 3:19-20, Romans 3:22-23

Topics: "Righteousness Of Faith"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that there is no distinction in grace because there is no distinction in sin. He encourages the audience to seek help in understanding their need for God's grace. The preacher challenges the idea that simply attending church or following religious practices is enough to be right with God. Instead, he emphasizes the importance of repentance and knowing Jesus. The sermon also highlights the role of the law in convicting sinners and the futility of trying to achieve righteousness through good deeds. The preacher references Romans 3:19 to support his message.

Transcript

Will you turn to the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans? And here at last, the Apostle Paul, having taken us through the dark paths of sin and condemnation, brings us into the light of the grace of God. Romans 3 verse 19. Now we know that what thing soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world, revised version, may become subject to the judgment of God.

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified, there shall no flesh be accounted righteous in his sight. For through the law cometh the knowledge of sin. These slight alterations are simply the revise.

For through the law cometh the knowledge of sin. But now, a righteousness of God, apart from the law, is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no distinction, for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.

Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, revised version, because of the passing over of sins done aforetime in the forbearance of God, to declare, I say at this time, his

righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded by what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith, apart from the deeds of the law.

Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also. Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid.

Yea, we establish the law. Well, what a portion it is, how packed full, and though there's only a few verses there, they will give us all we need to see the provision that God has for us. May I take a moment or two just to recapitulate? I repeat again that the theme of this great writing, as it is indeed the theme of the gospel itself, is the righteousness which is of faith.

We've said something of what is meant by this word righteousness. It is the righteousness which is of faith, as opposed to that attempted righteousness which is by works. If you want to give another name for the theme of this epistle, you can say it is guilt through grace to glory.

Guilt through grace to glory. Now, as we saw yesterday in the early part of this epistle, Paul is concerned, in the words of verse, chapter 3, verse 9, to prove both Jews and Gentiles all under sin. He had these two classes of people in mind, the unprivileged Gentiles, the religious Jews, and he's concerned to prove that equally they are both under sin.

And today, the same edict goes out. God wants to prove both religious and irreligious, that they're all under sin. God wants to prove that both church member and non-church member are all under sin.

And the apostle Paul is concerned not only to show that they are without righteousness, but also without excuse. And that is his purpose for each one of us, to show us to us to be without righteousness, but also each one utterly without excuse. It was pretty obvious that the Gentiles were without righteousness.

But not so obvious that they were without excuse. And we saw how Paul takes us back to the very source of things, and shows that even the most unenlightened have at least some light. And that in turning away from God to their own way, they are without excuse.

Because that which could have been known was revealed to them. But they didn't, didn't choose to have it. And because of that fact, God gave them up to all the vile passions that are mentioned there.

To prove, however, to the Jew that he was both without righteousness and without excuse was not so easy. There were two things which distinguished the Jew from everybody else. First of all, he had performed upon his body, every male, the divinely appointed right of circumcision, whereby he was separated out from all the other Gentiles, and marked out as God's chosen people.

And of course, he could but feel that that gave him a special title to God's favor. Why should God give such a right, if it didn't carry with it any special consideration? And therefore, it was built into his whole consciousness that he was on a different plane than the others. Then too, the Jew was given what no other nation was given, the moral law.

The Ten Commandments. Don't think that they were widely disseminated then as they are now. It was revealed to the Jew.

The moral law and the ritual law too. What a wonderful law. How David delighted in it.

Oh, he says it's more excellent than rubies. Oh, this holy law. This perfect holiness.

The trouble was with the Jew, however, that he thought it was enough to And that would be enough to make him fit for glory. And the mere fact that he had this law that others hadn't, once again, he felt, gave him a special title to divine consideration. Now, the purpose of the apostle with this rather tough customer was to apply to his heart and conscience the very law in which he boasted, which he thought gave him a special standing with God, and to convict him that although he had the law, he hadn't kept the law.

Maybe not in such ostensible ways had he broken it as the Gentiles, but he'd broken it nonetheless. And with God, there's no degree. With God, it's enough to lust wrongly after another, as much as it is to actually commit the deed, and so on.

And so it is the apostle Paul takes the real, how shall I put it, frontal attack. He says, this law that you think gives you special consideration to look at it. And he says, the actual fact is this, that you who make your boast in the law, by dishonoring, by breaking the law, have dishonored God, and the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

Look, these are the people who profess to be servants of God. Look how they behave. And so he applies to them this straightforward frontal attack.

Well, we needn't, we can see how obvious that applies to us, because even we can feel ourselves to be people of part. We know what others don't know. We have a knowledge of things, knowledge of spiritual things, but God would apply our very knowledge, and show us that we are rightly and properly condemned by the very standards, the very law which we have espoused.

Although we make our boast in the law, we have not kept it. And so he brings the Jew, by appealing to his conscience, under a sense of sin. And so he ends up with saying, we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, verse 9, that they are all under sin.

As it is written, there is none righteous, no not one. Now that is the first great word of this apostle. None right with God, no not one.

It matters not how religious your upbringing, it matters not how good your intention, it matters not how long you pray, how devout your attendance at the house of God. The Bible says there is none righteous, no not one. You've only to apply the very standards that you are glorying, close enough to your life, and you'll be down on your face before God.

Indeed, the man who knows much is the more guilty, because his sins are against light and knowledge, in a way that the other fellows aren't. And you know that's helped me to come to God, and to come to others in a right attitude. It's really helped me to come to others as a bigger sinner than they are.

I mean, I know they're sinners, but mine are against light and knowledge, perhaps they don't have. And I can tell you my sweetest times are when I've come to others as bigger sinners. I've been able to preach the more better to them when I come, not as a teacher, but as a bigger sinner.

Of whom much is given, of much shall be required. There is none righteous, no not one, not even you, my friend. And if you think in some little bit, there's some little place where you're a little better than the other

fellow, you have God against you.

He'll bring you down until at last, to admit. None righteous, not even me. Jew and Gentile, religious and irreligious, equally under sin when he stands before God.

And all this not to discourage us. Some people say, you know, this message is so depressing, you've utterly misunderstood it. This is the message that makes sinners happy, but sinners must first see themselves to be such.

Someone has said Christianity can only be proved and demonstrated to a bad conscience. And maybe our consciences need to be around to see how bad we are in the sight of God. And that's the purpose at the beginning of the epistle to the Romans.

And it should be the way in which we should normally preach the gospel. Before we can reveal this new rightness with God available to failures, first of all, we must make it clear that the wrath of God is revealed from all, against all unrighteousness and ungodliness. Even God.

Now, it seems to me that there would, however, be many Jews who would agree with the Apostle Paul that merely to possess the law, merely to hear the law, was not enough. Oh, I agree with you, Paul, they would say. You've got to do it.

The law wasn't given to tickle your ears. It's meant to be a moral guide which you've got to follow. I agree with you, Paul, it's not the hearers of the law that have justified God, but the doers of it.

And they felt they'd only got to do it, square their shoulders and measure up. And there was little doubt that they would be accounted right with God. And I feel that they thought they had done pretty well.

If as yet they hadn't quite succeeded, they'd need a little more effort, a little more religion. And sure enough, they succeed, and they come to the place where they would know themselves right with God, at peace with God, and all ready for glory. And whereas there are, I suppose, today, I know there are, in fact, because many in our churches who feel it's enough to go to church and hear, to possess this knowledge.

And that's enough. There are many others who go much further and say, no, no, no, it's not enough to go to church and just be outwardly religious. You've got to do it.

And I would say that the great message from our pulpit today is the message of do. Do, do, do. What a depressing message it is.

Do, do, do. And what they're giving us from the pulpit so often is merely good advice. But I'm so feeble, I can't take the good advice.

And I get only the more condemned by the good advice which I find myself unable to do. And so there were those that felt it was enough to do the works of the law. And that is the group that all the time the Apostle Paul has in mind.

Because it isn't something that was peculiar to the Jews, it's something built in to the human consciousness. Naturally, everybody feels you've got to do. You've got to attend.

Everybody naturally, apart from the correctives of God's revelation, would seek to get right with God by what they do, by the standards they arrive at, by their good conduct, by improving. In other words, by the

deeds of the law, by our obedience to the moral law. Now that is the natural thing for every one of us.

And although many of us here, of course, have come to know the Lord and the way of grace, that tendency is still strong in your heart. I know when I get cold and away from God, I still begin by being, well, I've got to pray some more. I've got to be better.

I've got to be nicer to my wife and help more. My dear friends, I'm defeated before I begin. How much good have I got to do to get right with God? And I know I can't make the grade.

Oh, there must be a better way than there is, of course. But that's the special backdrop against which the message of grace comes to us. Grace is not only the answer to sin, but it's the answer to law.

And I would say, next to sin, law--we shall see what that means as we go on--is the biggest foe to keeping a man away from God. And once we've found God, next to sin, law is the biggest foe from keeping us going on with God. I know I'm right in this because Paul is at pains in every epistle to deal with this much more subtle, and therefore much more dangerous foe to spiritual life, law.

Doing. Trying to get peace with God by obtaining. And it's only when you see that that is the thing in your own heart that then you'll come to appreciate the sweetness of good news for people who can't attain, because you can't attain.

Now, Paul, in coming to this important section, has a word then to tell us about the purpose of the law, from verses 19 and 20. Now, ostensibly, anybody will tell you that the purpose of a moral law--the do's and don'ts that regulate human behavior--are intended to be a moral guide. And there's no doubt at all that that is a primal purpose of the Ten Commandments and all moral principles--moral guides.

And the Apostle Paul doesn't for a moment deny that fact. He assumes that that is its purpose. But he goes on to tell us that that's not its deepest purpose.

That's not the divine, prime purpose in the giving of moral law and moral principles to mankind. Not merely that they should be their guide. He says the first purpose here, in verse 20, is that by the law there should come the knowledge of sin.

And mankind don't know what sin is until there's a law which prohibits certain things. If there wasn't a certain law prohibiting stealing, then it might be perfectly all right to steal. It's only when a man hears the law that he knows that what he's been doing all along is, in fact, sin.

And, of course, stealing is a very obvious one. But there are many other things that even we Christians don't regard as sin because the law hasn't really come close enough to us. It needs to.

Now, Paul will later have quite a lot to say about, by the law, coming the knowledge of sin. But just turn for a moment to Romans 7, verse 7, and you will see what is meant by the law cometh the knowledge of sin. Verse 7 of chapter 7, I had not known sin but by the law.

I had not known what sin was except by the Ten Commandments. Then he says, I had not known, oh my dear King James Version, if Jess Fox does hear a bit, I had not known lust except the law said thou shalt not covet. The King James translators felt that it was a great thing to show the richness of the English language.

There's so many different words to express the same thought. Well, I can understand, perhaps, that view of the language, but it's misleading. The word lust and the word covet is the same in the Greek.

And it ought to be translated, I had not known coveting except the law said thou shalt not covet. I've been coveting for years, coveting the other fellow's wife, coveting the other fellow's car, coveting all these things, and never thought anything of it. But one day I heard God say, thou shalt not covet.

He said, man, I've been doing that all the day. I never knew it was sin. And he said, the strange effect of the whole argument in Romans 7 is, not only did I know it was sin, but the very prohibition not to covet seemed to provoke more coveting in my heart than ever before.

The effect of law upon human nature is similar to the effect of water upon lime. If you pour water on lime, it fumes, it boils. Oh, you say, look at the smoke, at the steam, fetch some more water.

We'll put it out, but the more water you put on lime, the more steam comes out. And it's so easy to think, oh, I've got to do wicked hard, I'm not the Christian I should. I must embrace the law and try harder and face up to moral principles.

It'll only have the effect of drawing sin the more out of you. The law which says, thou shalt and thou shalt not, has no power to conquer sin. It seems to provoke sin.

And oh, what's needed is more light. Do we need a bit of law? By the law cometh the knowledge of sin. We don't know what God really wants.

Holiness in the inward part, not only in the outward. Yes, he says that's one of the primal purposes, to give us men a sense of sin. Then he says its purpose is to stop mouths, to stop mouths, to take away from our excuses.

In that last day of judgment, sinners will stand there and be charged with their sins. He said you knew, you knew, you knew this command, you boasted in it sometimes. And people will put their hands upon their mouths and do without excuse.

The law of God, the moral principles of God, are to render the sinner without excuse before God. Thirdly, it is to bring all the world subject to the judgment of God. There's something by which the world can be judged.

There would be no norm in the day of judgment had there not been a law. Mankind could not be convicted of being a lawbreaker unless there'd been a law to break. And the law of God will be in operation at the great white throne.

All the world, without exception, subject to the law of God which we've broken in thought, word, and deed. How foolish then to seek to get peace with God and righteousness before God by the deeds of that law when its deepest purpose was quite otherwise, to render you absolutely incapable. Yes, the purpose of the law is to bring the world subject to the law of God, in order, the judgment of God, in order that that same world might be subject to the grace of God.

Again, I say grace isn't grace if you've got a little bit of excuse. Grace isn't grace if there's one little bit of righteousness left. Grace is for those who haven't got anything.

The moment, merit, in any degree, or right feelings have to come in, or right anything. Grace isn't grace. Grace is for those who haven't got anything, not even an excuse.

And so as Paul says in Galatians, the law, the moral principles, are not meant to be our savior, they are meant to be our schoolmaster, to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified on another principle altogether, by faith. And so we come to that great but now. There then, he says very briefly, or he expounds on this at great length later on, the purpose of the law, but now, is revealed, apart from the law, a righteousness of God.

I go back to our first talk, this righteousness is to be equated with rightness with God. For the man who sees without righteousness, and without excuse, God has got a perfect, unassailable rightness with himself, which he's prepared to credit to, account to, the man who confesses himself absolutely undone. God is prepared, it's the great word of the gospel, to reckon those to be right, who confess themselves to be wrong.

And if a man says, everybody else is in a situation saying they're right, and the last one man, God overcomes him and works in his heart, he says, friend, I'm the one who's wrong. God says, now, you're the only one who's right. They who say they're either wrong, or the man who says he's wrong, and he may be wrong, it's not fancy.

While he's a sinner, God delights to account that man utterly right with himself, which is at work without any regard to his righteousness or unrighteousness. You know, the gospel almost sounds unlawful. Grace does sound like that sometimes, and yet, it's the source of all the morality, the truest morality in the whole world, as we shall see.

And here's this wonderful rightness with God, which I may know is counted to me on the authority of the God of all grace and pity. When I admit I'm wrong, God says, now, you stand before me right, as right as the blood of Jesus Christ, Jesus, thy blood of righteousness, my beauty are, my glorious death, with flaming worlds and these arrayed with joy, shall I lift up my head. Now, he says three things about this righteousness.

First, he says, it's a rightness apart from the law, without any reference whether you've kept the law or haven't kept the law. God is prepared to count the penitent right with himself. It's apart from the law, apart from our obedience or disobedience to moral principle.

I'm sorry, you'll have to take it. This is what the scriptures say. We said we did not, the gospel would never be understood apart from revelation.

It's the contrary to what you would normally think. But will you notice that whereas this righteousness, which is revealed for sinners, is apart from the law, he says it's witnessed by the law of the prophets. The very law, the very Old Testament, which was putting out the message of doom, has all sorts of prophecies of another message which says it's done.

Here's a little homework for you, I haven't had time to do it myself. List some places where this righteousness, which is apart from the law, is witnessed by the law of the prophets. List the places where in the law of the prophets, the righteousness which is of faith is witnessed, foreshadowed, prophesied.

Yes, it's apart from the law. And then he says a second thing, it is through faith. It is unto all and upon all those that are very good, those that have turned over a new leaf, those that are assiduous in their religious

duties, nothing of the sort.

It's unto all and upon all those who in their penitence put their faith in the saviour that God has offered to the world. Unto all and upon all them that believe. Now someone came to me and said, say a word to me again as to the difference between imputed righteousness and imparted righteousness.

This verse helps us. It's a righteousness, a rightness with God which is unto all and upon all them that believe. It's not something imparted.

It's not something firstly that makes you different and makes you better in yourself, not firstly. You see, if you think becoming a Christian is getting better and you get peace with God when you're better, well how much better have you got to be before you get peace with God? I haven't got to that place yet. Oh no, this is a rightness with God which is imputed or reckoned to the sinner while he is a sinner.

On one condition, he acknowledges that's what he is. The prodigal son had the kiss of peace put upon his cheek by the father while he was in the far country. He hadn't got back to the father's house.

But what he had said in the far country, Father I have sinned. And the father ran to meet him and there still in the far country with his clothes still smelling of the swine trough, he was at peace with his father. The rest of the journey was taken back to company with the father.

Oh he got back, he didn't stay in the far country, but he got peace in the far country when he confessed himself to be utterly wrong. I say again, you are accounted right with God even while you're a sinner. But on this condition, you break, you break, you bend your stiff neck.

Please turn the cassette over now, do not fast wind it in either direction. The moment you say you're wrong, God says now you're right, still you would think no chance to show you've improved, but you're as right with God as the grace of God and the blood of Christ can make you. He loved me while I was a sinner, without any sign of improvement.

He died for me while I was a sinner. The Bible tells me I was reconciled with God while I was a sinner. And I'm declared right with God while I'm a sinner.

But I say again, this is what gives the teeth, the moral teeth in the message of grace, you confess you're a sinner. Tell me, which has the most moral value, do you think, in the parable of the prodigal and the elder son in Luke 15? The elder son says, Father, I've served you many years, neither transgressed that any time thy commandment, I believe it was true. Or the prodigal said, Father, I've sinned.

We all know there was more moral value in the humility of a man that I've sinned than the years of strife of my father to serve his father. You know it, and God knows it. Oh yes, there's teeth in the message of grace, all right.

In a way that law hasn't. Law can sound tremendously impressive, you've got to promise to do this and promise to do that. Grace says, I don't want any promises, I want you to admit what you are.

Don't turn over a new leaf, turn back the past leaves. And I tell you, there's more moral value in turning back past leaves than futilely turning new ones, because you see, each new leaf is hiding the past ones. Our very attempts to be better, our duplicity.

We're hiding sin by trying to be better. God says, don't try to be better, tell me how bad you are. Turn back the past.

Let's have it out. Show me the books. And when you've got the books opened up, the blood of Jesus cleanses from sin.

You're as right with God as that blood could make you. This gives sinners a chance. It's unto all and upon all them that believe in that fashion.

And then he says, that in that righteousness there is no distinction. Will you look at Romans 3, verse 22 and 23. Even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe, listen, for there is no distinction.

That's the revised version. I think it's something a bit more than different. No distinction.

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. In other words, there is no distinction in grace, because there is no distinction in sin. That word, there is no distinction, is sandwiched between the righteousness of God and the sin of man.

It applies to both. There is no distinction in sin. All have sinned, preacher and hearer alike, ordained and unordained.

All have sinned. It doesn't say all have sinned. It says and come, present tense, short, and do come short.

They do now. Even after years of being saved. Nobody can say he's arrived.

They do come short, no difference. And because there's no difference in sin, people, sin levels every distinction. There's no distinction in grace.

Why, in the nature of the case, there can't be a distinction in grace. If it be of works, there'd be no more, it'd be no more grace. There's a distinction in works.

One man's done more, is better than another. But in the realm of grace, God isn't impressed with your attainment. They just don't count.

They don't come in. And there's no distinction in grace, because there's no distinction in sin. And God puts the same rightness with himself upon everyone who repents.

Now this has very practical implications. You know, we feel so, there's so many differences between Christians. Oh, he's a very good Christian, I'm not.

And you're never free in his presence. In a fellowship meeting, you'll give a testimony as long as they're only young people there. In fact, some more experienced Christians, oh no, I couldn't say anything, you see.

Because they're better than me. Listen, there is no distinction. You'll find there's no distinction in sin.

That supposedly better Christian, if he's honest and open, which he ought to be in a fellowship meeting, will tell you he's had jealousy that had to be cleansed that day as much as anybody else. What? The Reverend Mr. Sanderson. I never knew there was no distinction.

No, there isn't. It doesn't make any difference, I'm afraid, whether we get ordained or not. We're still the same.

No distinction in sin. But look, there's no distinction in grace. The thing that's given him peace and put a shine on his face, it's the same thing as putting a shine on mine.

It's Jesus. They're clad in the same righteousness, the same wedding garment. His is no better than mine.

How wrong of us then to have inferiority. Yes, if you're going to judge on the ground of works, there's plenty of ground for that. But in the realm of grace, you have as good a righteousness before God as George Muller had.

He was a sinner. And if he had anything to stand on before God, it was Jesus and his blood. What do you have? He had no better title to the Holy of Holies than you have.

You can walk into the places if it belongs to you, which it does, by the blood of Jesus, the newest, merest convert. We are healed by his stripes. Wouldst thou add to that word? And he is thy righteousness made, the best robe of heaven he bidst thee put on.

Oh, couldst thou be better arrayed? Could you? Oh, if I could pray as long as so and so, if you did, you wouldn't have a better garment than you've already got. And it's wonderful when we get our eyes on Jesus like that. What freedom there comes in a fellowship meeting, and with one another.

I remember going to Tunbridge Wells, and God led into that meeting in one of the Anglican churches in the center of the city, a woman who was really ripe for Christ, ripe for grace. She was a Roman Catholic, and she'd been under the law, and tried everything she knew, housed in despair. Someone had given her a New Testament.

She was living in a convent. She devoured it, and her heart was hungry, and peace came, and she saw her righteousness was Christ that day. And we had a talk with her at the end, and I saw the new birth actually take place.

It took, I think, about five seconds. At the beginning of five seconds, she was under sin. The next, alive! And the scales fell from her eyes, and the bonds from her heart, and she was free in her mouth.

I see it all. I see Jesus. I said, come and talk to the vicar.

The church was empty, great big church, and this woman went up this great aisle, and there was the holy table, looking very holy, very awesome enough to carry any new convert, but not her. Not her. And we went into the vestry, big imposing vestry, and here was this dear man of God.

He wasn't unapproachable as it so happened, praise the Lord, but he was the vicar, someone of real importance in the town. But you know, that woman talked to him as if he was her brother. She just poured out her testimony.

The best robe of heaven she'd put on, and she couldn't be better, not if she was the vicar. And in the next moment, the vicar was giving his testimony. And there they were, and I was too, all on the same level.

No distinction in grace, because there's no distinction in sin. Oh friend, don't you think you need help with that line? I do sometimes. You don't feel free, friend.

It's wrong to feel free. You've got the best robe of heaven. If you're repenting and knowing Jesus like this, you've got all that's necessary for heaven and for earth in him.

Well now, how much longer, how far shall we go? Now, we've got time to speak about how this righteousness, this rightness with God, is made ours. Three things I see here, I'd like to summarize things a little bit, it makes it easier for us to get hold of. Grace, prophecy.

Grace, prophecy. Grace, prophecy. It says so here.

Being justified, and listen, that word, justified, means being accounted right. You see, the trouble is, once again, we've got two words for one in the Greek. Righteousness and justification are the same.

If you wanted to keep the same word, you ought to say, being righteousified, freely by his grace. That's what it means, being accounted right, when you're a bit sure wrong. Being justified how? Freely by his grace.

Grace, prophecy. Without any reference to your good, I'm sorry to say, without any reference to your bad, I'm glad to say. Your good doesn't help you in this theory, your bad will hinder you if you confess.

Grace is going to make this rightness with God yours without any reference to the one or the other. Unless we shouldn't get the meaning, he had this word freely, and it means gratuitously. A gratuitous justification in which you've done nothing to contribute to it.

All something altogether of God. You see, naturally, we're all trying to contribute to it. If I have a right feeling, if I have a pious attitude, it's going to help.

It's not going to help at all. It could hinder if you're depending on it. You're going to be justified gratuitously by his grace.

Now this word freely, I think it appears perhaps only once, at least in one other place. John 15 25, look at it. And this is such a lovely light it sheds upon.

I can hardly believe that this watch had only gone as far as it had. I was trying to see if it was still going. It's in, so it's all right.

We'll just get through, I think. John 15 25, but this comes to pass, says Jesus, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, they hated me without a cause. Same word as free.

They hated me gratuitously. Put this translation in the Romans passage, being justified without a cause by his grace. Grace doesn't look to find a procuring cause in us for our salvation.

It's going to be without a cause. And that's melted the saints all down the earth. As the old hymn says, Jesus, what didst thou find in me that thou hast dealt so lovingly? He didn't find anything.

God didn't expect to find anything in yourself on which he could ground his salvation. He's found it in somebody else, in Jesus, as we shall see. If you like to turn to Numbers 23, you have a foreshadowing of this gratuitous righteousness which is reckoned to the sinner who repents.

Numbers 23 verse 21, they wanted to curse Israel, but God put a word in his mouth against his will, and this is what he had to say. Numbers 23 21, he hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen

perverseness in Israel, but Israel were full of it. By the moment Israel's enemies tried to fight against them, God said, I'm their justification, I stand for them.

And there was a justification utterly gratuitous. Grace, dear one, prophet. Even you, you say, I'm not good enough.

You missed the point of grace. It's gratuitous, without a cause. You've been under the law long enough, well, you have to be good enough.

Now God's got this wonderful new way of saving men and blessing them. Yes, grace, prophet. Then, this passage, going back to Romans, the blood secures it.

The blood of the Lord Jesus secures it. Being justified freely by his grace, listen, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. Now don't worry, don't have any hesitancy about this great Bible word, propitiation.

I rather think that the translators of the New English Bible didn't like it too well, I don't know why, because in 1 John 2, 1, the way it occurs, it says, he is the remedy for the defilement of our sin. He's there. But what John said, he's the propitiation for our sin.

You see, the word propitiation implies the wrath of God, and that's not acceptable to the natural man. You know, when hubby has done something wrong, and he wants to make things right with his wife, he sometimes brings back some flowers, or a box of chocolates, and we say he's bringing a peace offering. Actually, that's not the way to get right with God or your wife.

You just say you're sorry to God and to her, and the things are as right as God can make it. But thereof, we try this other way, we talk, a peace offering. It implies there's indignation at the other person, there's got to be a peace.

That's the problem. In all its ugliness and starkness, don't boggle at it. God's holiness has been offended by man's sin.

He needs to be propitiated. And that which has rendered a complete and a glorious propitiation of God's wrath against him is the precious, precious blood of Jesus. The wrath of a sin-hating God with me can have nothing to do, my Savior's obedience to blood hides all my transgressions from view.

God has set forth him, dear one, for you. Yes, there was wrath, but there was love. Why, it was love that made him your propitiation.

He wanted you so much back to himself that he preferred to see his son die rather than you and me perish. Set him forth as my propitiation by his blood. And I've quoted that verse in 1 John 2, 1. And he, if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, and he is the propitiation for my sins.

Friends, to know that God is just gives rest and peace within. I could not in a mercy trust that takes no count of sin. But the mercy that God offers us has taken count of sin.

It's taught with the blood of Christ. What a terrible judgment-bearing did Jesus not take for us on Calvary. And the blood secures it.

This makes it, as we shall see in a moment, right with God to declare wrath, to declare wrath to those who are wronged. And you know he is satisfied with that propitiation. He showed it by the fact that he raised our Lord Jesus from the dead.

If Jesus had not paid the debt, he never had been at freedom's end. God satisfied with what Jesus has done for us. We are sometimes, oh, if only I could be better.

If only I could improve some, I should have peace with God. Listen, God is satisfied with that blood. He's demonstrated it by raising his son from the dead, but we want something extra to that.

Oh friend, be content to take the place of a sinner and nothing to it. But Jesus Christ, our all in all, this righteousness, grace, prophecy, the blood secures it. It cannot be withdrawn.

Payment God will not twice demand. First at my bleeding, short his hand, and then again of mine. And faith, faith receives it.

It's as if he says in the words of that hymn, precious, precious blood of Jesus, ever flowing free. Oh believe it, oh receive it man, it is for thee. But I'm not good at, oh man, there you are going back again.

Oh believe it, oh receive it, it's being done. Faith, if empty has it, well I'll take it as a fact. But if you say the blood of Christ cleanses, if you say Christ is my rightness with thee, that's enough for me.

If however, in seeking to come to Christ in faith, you don't get peace, the chances are you haven't repented. Not as you should. And maybe you've got to go a bit deeper.

Maybe you haven't turned back, the past leads. Oh yes, faith is only operative in a heart that's repenting. And maybe God will say no, no, they say you're not quite honest about something.

You're prepared to put something right, but not everything. You are prepared to tell the truth to that person. You heard the story of the farm boy who, he got convicted of stealing something from his boss.

He went to the farmer and told the farmer he was so sorry he'd stolen the rope. Oh said the farmer, that's all right, you keep that. But he still hadn't got peace, he didn't tell the farmer that there was a cow attached to the rope.

You only get forgiven the cow when you confess the cow. Now listen, I must balance this, that even when you've done all the repenting in the world, and you've gone as far as you have, that still isn't your righteousness. You still haven't got peace.

You don't get peace by repentance, you get peace by Jesus, by that blood. And you have come to Jesus. Some of us we know are saying we've repented, we're still sighing.

And you can even make works out of your repentance depending on that. That's why you don't get peace. The truest repentance is that which casts even the value of itself aside as Lord here am I. And oh how quickly God delights to receive it.

Well that hasn't quite covered all there is in this passage, or of course it hasn't, but I had a few more things, but that's enough, I think that's the place to which to stop. Grace, prophecy, the blood of Jesus, the purity, and faith received. We'll have to say more about how this applies in the daily life of a Christian, but I'm going to tell you this, this knowing yourself right with God isn't a thing of merely for conversion.

It isn't merely for the Bible study, justification by faith. It has a very dull, dead sound to me, so it's a tingling, contemporary, up-to-the-minute experience. I'm not suggesting you lose your justification from day to day according to how you're walking, but I do say if you don't repent quickly of things that come, you lose a sense of the justification and it won't be an up-to-date experience.

But as I prepare to take the place which I first took when I began, I'll have the same sweet consciousness of being as right with God as the blood can make me, which I first had when I first came. So we can continue in the freshness of good news for bad people. Let us pray.

And so dear Lord, we want to thank thee for this amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. We want to thank thee for the surprise of it all. As we hear this old sweet message again, a new astonishment comes into our hearts and a love for a God like thyself.

May that love like a fetter bind our wandering hearts to thee. Amen. The grace, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore.

Amen.

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