

How The Gospel Reveals the Righteousness of God

“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 for faith, as it is written, the righteous shall live by faith.” Romans 1:16-17

How does the gospel reveal the righteousness of God?

What is the gospel? From Romans 1:1-5, the gospel is:

- from God; it's *His* gospel
- promised beforehand through the prophets in the Scriptures
- concerning His Son – it's about Christ; Christ is the content of the gospel
 - who was descended from David according to the flesh according to the flesh (fulfilling the promise of a coming King over the people of God);
 - who was declared to be the Son of God in power thru the Spirit of holiness thru the resurrection of the dead;
 - who is Jesus Christ our Lord;
 - thru whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ (He gives purpose and direction to our lives and to history.)

At its core, the gospel is the declaration that Jesus Christ is Lord! (Romans 10:9-10) The *evangelion* to a Roman is the proclamation that an heir to the throne has been born. [And then, of course, all that lies behind that in Christ's person, purpose and work --incarnation, sinless life, atoning death, victorious resurrection, vicarious intercession, glorious appearing, eternal rule.]

What is the righteousness of God?

Righteousness is a rich term that can be viewed in three interlocking layers.

1) Righteousness as doing what's right - Romans 1:18-2:5

Clue: God's righteousness contrasted with unrighteousness.

On the surface, righteousness is conformance to a norm (the Law). This is righteousness as justice (Greek: *dike'* and its derivatives); doing what is right. This comes out most clearly in Romans when Paul discusses its converse, unrighteousness, e.g., 1:18—3:20. Throughout the Psalms and Proverbs, the righteous person is the one who is morally upright, obeying God's commandments, in contrast to the unrighteous, sinful man who does not. Righteousness as the opposite of sin is how this term is used in John's first epistle. Paul's point in 1:18-

3:20 is that what is morally right is not arbitrary, but flows from His character and our having been made in His image.

2) Righteousness as restoring right relationship -- Romans 1:16-17, 3:21-26

Clue: Righteousness and Justification are the same word in Greek – *dikaiosyne*

On a deeper level, righteousness is covenant faithfulness. This is righteousness as right relationship. It is God's movement to **restore** right relationship. This is what Paul means when he says "in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed" (1:17). This movement of God is detailed most clearly in Romans 3:21-5:1, where the righteousness of God is contrasted with the unrighteousness of men. God remains faithful to His covenant with Abraham; He acts to restore right relationship; He "justifies the ungodly" (4:5); He is "both just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (3:26). Thus, at this level, an act of righteousness is an act of reconciliation (5:10-11, 2 Cor 5:17-21). It was Luther's insight on 1:16-17 that the righteousness of God here is His action to save rather than to punish which fueled the Reformation. By the way, this also explains Jesus' intriguing statement to John the Baptist in Matt 3:15—His baptism launches His ministry to restore right relationship with man, which is an action of the Triune God.

3) Righteousness as the sovereign choice of God in keeping with His nature as good -Romans 9:30-10:4, Romans 9:14

Clue: God's Righteousness is manifested in election

There is yet a deeper, bedrock meaning of righteousness—specifically as it refers to the righteousness of God. John Piper uncovers this bedrock layer in his exegesis of Romans 9:1-23 in his book The Justification of God (which Piper calls fountainhead of all his other writing and preaching). This is righteousness not just as justice but as truth—the truth of who God is in His very nature. Piper examines Paul's use of Exodus 33-34 in Romans 9 and finds the core truth about God is His goodness and His power and right of choice. To be God is to choose, and to choose in accord with His goodness. In the beginning, God spoke creation into being, and it was good. God created man in His image and set him (them) over His creation, and it was very good. God acts to redeem His fallen children and it is announced as good news. God exercises His sovereign grace over the events of our lives such that "all things work together for good" (8:28). The righteousness of God is that His word is truth, and that He chooses and acts in accord with His goodness.

This comes out in Romans 9-11 where Paul describes Christ as "the end (Greek: *telos*, goal or purpose) of the law for righteousness to every one who believes". And it comes out in these chapters' extensive elaboration of "God's purpose in election" which is "to make known the riches of His glory".

Thus, God's righteousness is His unswerving commitment to act in accord with His nature and His glory—specifically, His action to save. (adapted from Piper, with help from Bird). God's righteousness in election is implemented in a plan, into which He has invited our participation (10:1, 2 Cor 5:16).

So, how does the Gospel reveal the righteousness of God? (1:16)

- It shows that while God will judge sin, He will also save
- It shows God is both just and the justifier of those who believe in Jesus
- It shows that God is good, and he acts according to His goodness to choose and to save.

So, what do we do with these truths? See!

- Behold your God! (11:33-36)
- See what God has made manifest—that justification is the gift of God through the redemption (the cross) that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood (3:24-25)
- View ourselves as part of this great missionary enterprise “to bring about the obedience of faith among all nations”. (1:5, 16:26)

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How does the gospel reveal the righteousness of God?

What is the gospel? From Romans 1, the gospel:

What is the righteousness of God?

1) Righteousness & Holiness

2) Righteousness & Justification

3) Righteousness & Election

So, how does the gospel reveal the righteousness of God?

What do we do with this truth?

In Christ Alone

In Christ alone my hope is found;
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all—
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.

"In Christ Alone"

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