

**Subject: *God's Righteousness in the Gospel***

**Scripture: *Romans 1:14-17***

Last week we considered what it means to be committed to the gospel, and we know what a privilege it is to have the gospel, believe and obey the gospel, and share the truth of the gospel with all people. The gospel of Christ is the truth of salvation for all who believe and obey. In this message we're going to focus on Paul's main theme of God's righteousness in the gospel.

In Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 15), we find the basic elements of the gospel: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again according to the Scriptures to save sinners. These are the basic facts of the gospel, the good news of salvation. But why did Christ have to do that? If God is in control of all things, couldn't He just forgive sins by His command and that would be enough. After all, that's the way He created all things. He spoke and it was done. If God is gracious and merciful, couldn't He just pardon everybody? If God is loving and kind, why did Jesus have to go through all that suffering to save sinners?

Well, the answer is found in the Bible. God is not only in control (sovereign), and not only gracious and merciful, and not only loving, but He is also righteous and holy. This is the point Paul makes in Romans 1, and then develops that point in the rest of the book. God is righteous and the gospel reveals His righteous character. He is the judge of all men and He has made a way to save sinners that reveals His grace, mercy, love, and His righteousness.

In Romans 1:17, Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4, "The just shall live by faith." God's righteousness is revealed in the gospel. God must judge sin because He is perfectly righteous, but if He judges sinners that would be bad news, not good news. In the gospel God made a way to punish sin and pardon sinners at the same time. He sent His Son Jesus to bear His righteous judgment against sinners by suffering in the place of sinners. God placed our sins upon Christ and He places His righteousness upon us. The gospel involves a great exchange—Christ takes our sins and we receive His righteousness. If we are to understand God's righteousness in the gospel we need to see three things:

### **1. Righteousness is what we all need**

#### ***Romans 3:10, 23***

All people need righteousness. Sin blinds us so we can't see our need. We tend to think we're pretty good compared to other people. We judge ourselves by the wrong standard. We had a little snow and this illustration came to mind (sheep on a hillside grazing and they appear to be so white against the green grass; but then the next day there is a layer of snow on the ground and the same sheep look so dirty against the white snow).

Some people realize they are not righteous and try to make themselves better. This is called self-righteousness. They always strive to do better and be better, and then they become proud of their own righteousness. This may seem to work, but it never works with God.

Jesus told the parable of the Pharisee and the publican (tax collector) – ***Luke 18:9-14***

Do you understand you have a sinful heart and a record of breaking God's laws? Don't pretend that you're basically a good person. If you do, Christ has nothing for you, for He came to save sinners.

## **2. Righteousness is what God provides in Christ**

### ***Romans 3:20-26***

As Paul continues to show how God saves sinners, he says that no one is righteous by keeping God's moral law (Ten Commandments). That's impossible. If that were possible, then Christ would not have died on the cross.

***Galatians 2:21*** *I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

God provides righteousness to sinners as a free gift, the righteousness of Christ. The Reformers called it "alien righteousness." This is what it means to be justified. God declares the sinner righteous because he has the righteousness of Christ imputed (credited) to him.

## **3. Righteousness in Christ is received by faith**

### ***Romans 10:1-10***

Paul already made this clear in ***Romans 4:1-3, 20-25***.

No one is so good he need not be saved, and no one is so bad he cannot be saved. The gospel is the good news that God saves sinners by His mercy and grace by providing the righteousness they need through the finished work of Jesus Christ when they put their trust in Him.

One of our great hymns "The Solid Rock" says it this way:  
*My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness...*

*When He shall come with trumpet sound, O may I then in Him be found, dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.*