

# ROMANS

## Declared Not Guilty

ROMANS 4:23-24

November 05, 2016

### Today

Today we are diving ever deeper into the truth of Righteousness by Faith.

After Paul's declaration that he was not ashamed of the gospel - he began to outline just how important that power is in the story of your life and mine.

### JUSTIFICATION NEEDED

Paul began by stating that God has provided enough information about Himself in the natural world that people – specifically groups other than Jews - can know Him if they want to and are therefore, without excuse (v. 19-20). However, instead of worshipping the Creator, they choose to worship created things, which leads them down a destructive path (v. 25).

### Pagans/Gentiles are Guilty before God:

God's wrath is the natural expression of His holiness and righteousness which must always, under all circumstances, and at all costs be maintained. It manifests itself against the willful, high-handed, deliberate, inexcusable sin and iniquity of mankind. Therefore, righteous indignation is compatible with the holy and righteous nature of God (Numbers 11:1-10; Deuteronomy 29:27; 2 Samuel 6:7; Isaiah 5:25; 42:25; Jeremiah 44:6; Psalms 79:6). Love and compassion are always closely connected with God's anger. Righteous anger against sin is the result of God's deep love for humanity (compare Jeremiah 10:24; Ezekiel 23; Amos 3:2).

- **Oswald Chambers:** Consider this revelation—the eternal fact that God is love, not, God is loving. God and love are synonymous. Love is not an attribute of God, it is God; whatever God is, love is. If your concept of love does not agree with justice, judgment, purity, and holiness, then your idea of love is wrong.

In Romans 1:24, God's wrath is expressed by the term "He gave them over". He allows them what they want and hands them over to their depraved minds.

Now, I am going to pause for just a second and talk about v. 26-28. These verses have been used by Christians as proof of God's displeasure against Homosexuality - exclusively. Certainly, we cannot deny the Biblical position against Homosexuality, but the wording used is broader in scope. The context is ALL sexual sin outside the marriage of one man and one woman. God views ALL sexual sin as SIN. That includes sex before marriage, sex with someone other than your spouse, sex with a family member, sex with an animal (Leviticus 20:10-21) – ALL are considered evil and depraved in God's sight.

WHY?

Is it because God doesn't want you to have fun? **NO**

Is it because God is holding out on you? **NO**

Why then?

Because the family, the intimate relationship between a husband and wife is as close as humans can get to the relationship the Godhead has with each other and the relationship They want to have with us. It is deeply personal and exclusive - that is why in the Old Testament, God likens Idolatry to Adultery. Israel committed spiritual adultery and stepped out of their covenant relationship with God by worshipping other gods.

- **Jeremiah 3:8-9** - And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. <sup>9</sup> "And it came about because of the lightness of her harlotry, that she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees.
- **Jeremiah 5:7** - Why should I pardon you? Your sons have forsaken Me And sworn by those who are not gods. When I had fed them to the full, they committed adultery and trooped to the harlot's house.

- **Ezekiel 23:37** - For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. Thus, they have committed adultery with their idols and even caused their sons, whom they bore to Me, to pass through *the fire* to them as food.

One of Satan's primary targets, then, is the family. If he can destroy the family, he goes a long way in destroying our understanding of God – and that is why God so jealously desires to guard the family.

It would be convenient if Paul had just stopped there, but he didn't,

- **Romans 1:28-32** - And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, <sup>29</sup> being filled with **all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;** <sup>32</sup> and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Have you ever been envious?

Have you ever spread gossip?

Have you been untrustworthy or unmerciful or unloving?

**Then you are guilty before the God of the universe - just as much as the person who engages in sexual sin.**

Therefore, when Paul cautions just a few verses later regarding judgement, he is quick to point out that in judging others we condemn ourselves because we do the very same thing (ch 2:1-3).

So, far, Paul has been speaking to the Gentiles in the church and reminds them that even those who are unaware of the written laws of God stand without excuse because of the General / Natural revelations of God.

The Jews, at this point, might have been feeling pretty smug, but now Paul shifts his focus to them – those who **DO KNOW** the written law of God – who were given Prophetic Revelation as well as Special Revelation (Jesus). They, too, stand without excuse before God. (Ch 2:11-13).

**Jews are Guilty before God:**

Paul compares the 2 groups:

He seems to think that those who have no knowledge of the written law can and do obey the law instinctively. The law has been written in their hearts and they obey the law automatically without having been told to do so.

He then turns again to the Jews – the **knowers** of the law – the **boasters** of the law – they dishonor God when they break the law. Paul is telling the Jews that their guilt is **GREATER** because they've had so much more information than those who did not have the law.

**He ends this section by stating that it is not the outward sign of circumcision that makes a Jew, instead it is an inward sign - a circumcision of the heart that makes a true Jew.**

- **Deuteronomy 10:12-16** - And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup> and to keep the LORD's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? <sup>14</sup> "Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. <sup>15</sup> "Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, *even* you above all peoples, as *it is* this day. <sup>16</sup> "Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more.
- **Isaiah 51:7** - Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, A people in whose heart is My law; Do not fear the reproach of man, neither be dismayed at their revilings.
- **Jeremiah 4:4** - Circumcise yourselves to the LORD And remove the foreskins of your heart, Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My wrath go forth like fire and burn with none to quench it, Because of the evil of your deeds."
- **Jeremiah 9:26** - Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the sons of Ammon, and Moab, and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart."

**The Whole World is Guilty before God:**

Before a holy and righteous God – ALL ARE GUILTY. No one has an excuse to be living outside the will and law of God. (ch 3:9-18)

Now Paul shifts gears again. All this time he has been talking about the law and if he had stopped there our discussion of Righteousness by faith would be over. **If law is the determiner of guilt or innocence then we are all guilty and the story is over.**

But Paul says something very interesting: Keeping the law will not justify anyone in the sight of God – the only thing the law can do is bring a knowledge of / an awareness of sin.

**George Knight in his book, “I Used To Be Perfect” asserts that SIN begins in the heart/mind and the results are sins in action: “the crucial point to recognize is that SIN is much more than a series of unrelated actions. It reflects a state of heart and mind.”**

Which is why God states in:

- **Jeremiah 24:7** - And I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.
- **Ezekiel 11:19-20** - And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, <sup>20</sup> that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

Notice:

- WHO promised to deal with our hard heart issue - GOD.
- WHEN He promised to do it – in the OLD TESTAMENT.

**Therefore, Righteousness by Faith is an Old Testament promise not a New Testament promise.**

## JUSTIFICATION PROVIDED

How are we justified?

Paul says that apart from the law the righteousness of God was manifested in the Old Testament and that same righteousness is available to all who put their faith in Jesus.

We have all sinned – the field is level, but through Jesus all who believe are justified before God. It is a free gift. Remember, it is not your nationality or culture or religious affiliation, it is what you believe to be true that matters before God. Do you believe that you are a sinner in need of a Savior? Do you believe that Jesus died for you – not the faceless masses – but for YOU PERSONALLY? Do you believe that when God looks at you, He does not see your SINFUL life, He sees Jesus SINLESS life? Do you believe and has that belief changed you?

Do you see how Jeremiah 24:7 and Ezekiel 11:19-20 are fulfilled by our faith in Jesus?

Now, before you get nervous, I am in no way saying that obedience does not matter. Obedience absolutely matters, but it is WHY you obey that is important. Your motivation for obedience is what is truly important. Do you obey so that other people will look up to you – that you will “appear” good OR do you obey because you would never want to do anything to damage your relationship with God?

**Righteousness by faith turns outward law keeping into an inward reality – Law keeping becomes as natural as breathing – You just ARE a law keeper. It’s a heart thing!!**

Paul now gives an example – Abraham. According to Paul, Abraham believed God and that counts as righteousness.

He continues by saying that we are not “owed” righteousness because of our good behavior – instead we are counted AS righteous because we believe in HIM (Jesus) who JUSTIFIES (treats us as though we had never sinned) the UNGODLY (you and me).

Paul continues his argument by quoting David.

- **Psalm 32:1-2** - How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered! <sup>2</sup> How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!

**Like Paul, David understood how it felt to stand before God guilty: Guilty of adultery and guilty of murder. He knew where his sin started and he also knew what it felt like to stand before God justified.**

- **Psalm 51:9-17** - Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. <sup>10</sup> Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Do not cast me away from Thy presence, and do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit. <sup>13</sup> *Then* I will teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners will be converted to Thee. <sup>14</sup> Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; *Then* my tongue will joyfully sing of Thy righteousness. <sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips, that my mouth may declare Thy praise. <sup>16</sup> For Thou dost not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offering. <sup>17</sup> The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

## Take Aways

The promise of Righteousness / Justification was not given to Abraham alone, but to ALL of his descendents who choose to believe. Those who know the law and those who don't, because the only qualification in receiving the Righteousness of God is to believe that He has provided it for you.

You can't get it by being better or sinning less, or gauge it by what you have done vs. what someone else has done.

You get it purely because:

- It has been paid for by Someone Else.
- Offered to you as a Free Gift.
- You receive it with Gratitude.
- And you are Transformed.

That's it. SIMPLE

It is my offer to you today. Believe what God has promised and believe that it applies to you. And then, accept it with open hearts and hands – placing your trust in the completed work of Jesus.