

Title: Jesus Christ our Righteousness

Text: Romans 3: 9-31

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Place: SGBC, New Jersey

Let's read Romans 3: 9-31. We have each come here from a busy week full of activity. You probably have much planned later today. Turn your minds from all of that for moment and give me your attention. I have the most important message you could ever hear.

Each person here will one day stand before God in judgment. None of the vain religious games of idolatry men engage in will be of any benefit; none of our worldly achievements or our earthly possessions will be of any benefit.

1 Ti 6:7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.

None of the things that take up the majority of your time and attention in this life will be of benefit in the day we meet God.

In that day, if we expect to be accepted of God we will need to be perfectly righteous and holy. We will need a full payment to God's justice for our sin—eternal death; we will need to be righteous—to have established God's law in righteousness from the womb to our last breath; we will need to be holy—in heart, in nature. How righteous? How holy?—there is only one kind—as righteous and holy as God.

**Divisions:** 1) We must not look to our persons for what we need; 2) We must not look to our law-keeping for what we need; 3) We must have Christ.

**Proposition:** In the day we stand before God, we must be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of our own, which is of the law, but that righteousness which is through the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ—which Christ is—the righteousness which is God's gift, received through God's gift of faith.

## **I. WE MUST NOT LOOK TO OUR PERSONS FOR WHAT WE NEED.**

Usually, when confronted with the thought of sin and judgment men look to their persons—"Am I all that bad? Am I really a sinner?" The Holy Spirit used Paul to establish the truth that it does no good to look for goodness in us—we are all born under sin.

**Romans 3: 9: What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;**

The Spirit begins in chapter 1 by describing the awful, sinful condition of Gentiles. God gave them the light of nature.

Romans 1: 25 Who changed the truth of God INTO A LIE, and worshipped and served THE CREATURE more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections:

- Homosexuality, all unrighteousness
- Fornication, Envy
- Proud, Boasters, Haters of God
- On and on we are given this awful description of the Gentiles

**Illustration:** You have heard preachers use such a text to preach against particular sins? So sinners clean up the outside of the cup: become moral, perhaps join the church and think now they are righteous. Those who have already cleaned up the outside hear the message and are so proud of themselves that they are not like other men.

Isa 65:5: Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day.

That is NOT how the Spirit of God moved Paul to use those awful sins.

The Holy Spirit knows what religious men would be thinking—men who have the law, who do not do those sinful things outwardly. So the Holy Spirit turns to those men and says through Paul.

Romans 2: 1: Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest **DOEST THE SAME THINGS**.

**Application:** Each one here this morning—in your flesh—the natural man—is sin. The Holy Spirit is speaking here of what the natural man **IS**—in the heart, in our sin-nature.

Matthew 15: 19...out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: 20: These are the things which defile a man:...

Luke 11:39: And the Lord said...Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

Look down to Romans 2: 28—this is the point. Since we are dealing with the heart, we will take the first part:

Romans 2: 28: For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly;

**Listen carefully.** No sinner is a true child of God, pure and holy within, by things we do outward in our flesh.

Romans 2: 29: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly;...

A true child of God, pure and holy, is one in the new man—“which after God is **CREATED** in righteousness and true holiness.”

Romans 2: 29:...whose praise is not of men, **BUT OF GOD**.

So the Spirit of God moves Paul to conclude his argument in our text:

**Romans 3: 9: What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;**

Here is God’s description of the natural man with which we are all born the first time.

**Romans 3: 10: As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. 13: Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips: 14 Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness: 15 Their feet *are* swift to shed blood: 16 Destruction and misery *are* in their ways: 17 And the way of peace have they not known: 18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.**

**Application:** So it does none of us any good to look to self—we are all under sin.

## II. WE MUST NOT LOOK TO OUR LAW-KEEPING FOR WHAT WE NEED.

When confronted with sin and judgment, men usually turn to the ten commandments to straighten themselves up.

**Romans 3: 19: Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law:**

All who are born the first time of Adam—whether Jew or Gentile, religious or irreligious—all in their unregenerate, natural born state are all under the law. What does the law say to those who are under the law?

**Romans 3: 19: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.**

This is not what we hear the law say about us until the Spirit of God sends the commandment into our hearts in truth. But when God the Spirit teaches his child what the law says—the law stops our mouth from boasting that we have kept it and we stand silent in astonishment at our sin. The law declares all guilty before God. Not one child of Adam has ever kept the law, all are guilty

**Romans 3: 20: Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

No sinner can find justification before God by his law-keeping. God did not give the law for us to seek life by it. Unregenerate sinners think that is why the law was given. But God tells us clearly right here why he gave the law: **by the law is the knowledge of sin.**

Romans 5: 20: Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.

The offense the law declares to us is the offense of that one transgression in the garden in Adam whereby we broke the whole law of God and came under the curse. Our own sin becomes exceedingly sinful to us, even our so-called law-keeping—our righteousnesses—are sin.

Romans 7: 7: What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. 8 But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence. For without the law sin *was* dead. 9 For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. 10 And the commandment, which *was ordained* to life, I found *to be* unto death. 11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew *me*. 12 Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good. 13 Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.

Galatians 3: 21 *Is* the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. 22 But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. 23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. 24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster *to bring us* unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. 25 But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

**So we cannot look to our law-keeping.** If I cannot look to my person for it is sin, and I cannot look to my law-keeping because it was given to give the knowledge of sin and shuts my mouth in guilt, then how can I be justified and righteous and holy so that God can and will accept me?

## III. WE MUST HAVE CHRIST.

**Romans 3: 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God BY FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST...**

The righteousness of God by the faith of Christ Jesus is witnessed by all the whole Old Testament scriptures.

Luke 24: 27: And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Romans 1: 1: Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, 2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) 3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,

**IT IS BY THE FAITH CHRIST JESUS WHO WAS OBEDIENT UNTO THE DEATH OF THE CROSS THAT SINNERS ARE MADE RIGHTEOUS**

Romans 5: 17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the GIFT of RIGHTEOUSNESS shall reign in life BY ONE, JESUS CHRIST.) 18: Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF ONE the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. 19: For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by THE OBEDIENCE OF ONE shall many be MADE RIGHTEOUS. 20 Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: 21 That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through RIGHTEOUSNESS unto eternal life BY JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

Every person whom God shall save by his grace shall be made righteous this one way—

- NOT by us, we are sinners;
- not by the deeds of our law-keeping,
- but by the obedience of Christ Jesus.

The righteous of Christ is unto all God's elect and upon all them that believe

**Romans 3: 22...unto all and upon all them that believe:**

His righteousness is UNTO all the elect of God—it is appointed for them, worked out for them, and reserved for them—for it was only for them that Christ died. "I lay down my life for the sheep." And his righteousness is upon all them that believe because we have been circumcised in the heart.

Romans 2: 29:...neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29...circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Outward circumcision was the first act whereby a new born child was brought under the covenant of works—which meant he was required to do all the law.

Circumcision of the heart, is the first act we experience whereby God's new born child is MADE A NEW CREATURE—CREATED RIGHTEOUS AND HOLY IN SPIRIT, made willing to believe on Christ and thereby brought under the everlasting covenant of grace—Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes. Christ is our Righteousness.

Galatians 6: 12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. 14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, BY WHOM the world is

crucified unto me, and I unto the world. 15 For IN CHRIST JESUS neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, BUT A NEW CREATURE. 16 And as many as walk according to THIS RULE, peace *be* on them, and mercy, and upon THE ISRAEL OF GOD.

Why is it that all those God saves are all saved only by the righteousness of Christ through faith?

**Romans 3: 23: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;**

But the good news is justification is by God's free grace through Christ paying all our debts to the law.

**Romans 3: 24: Being justified freely by his grace...through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:**

Free grace—means not by any merit or work done by those God saves. All were dead in trespasses and in sins. We can do nothing to save ourselves. God chose whom he would freely by his grace. He gave us to Christ to redeem us.

Redemption is the payment of the debt God's people owed to the justice of God. According to God's law, the only one who can redeem is the near Kinsmen. Christ is the Son of God and those God chose in Christ are the children of God. That makes Christ our Elder Brother, the near Kinsmen, who alone had the lawful right to redeem his brethren.

The payment the children of God owed to God's justice was eternal death. But Christ was willing to pay our debt by taking our place on the cursed tree. When Christ cried, "It is finished" he declared the debt was paid. God raised him from the dead for our justification, declaring the debt was paid in full. Christ accomplished eternal redemption for his people so that we owe nothing else to the justice of God ever again—that means the law of God has nothing else to say to the believer for all eternity—that is how fully Christ paid our debt.

Hebrews 9:12 : Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us

Therefore, being justified freely by his grace God shall give each and every one of his children eternal life through the redemption that in Christ Jesus.

Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Christ is God's provided Propitiation for his people.

**Romans 3: 25: Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood,**

In the old testament picture, in the holiest of holies, there was a mercy seat, over the broken law. The high priest, representing the children of Israel, entered once a year, with the blood of the lamb, and sprinkled blood seven times. Atonement was made in type. That mercy seat in blood was the propitiation.

- Christ is that High Priest
- Christ shed his own blood
- Christ is the mercy seat
- Believing that by his blood our atonement has been accomplished—God will meet a sinner and accept us?

**Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood,**

The reason God will accept us through faith in Christ and the reason he only accepts us through faith in Christ is because God is righteous to do so, in the faithfulness of Christ the righteousness of God is declared:

**Romans 3: 25: to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.**

**God is just**—because Christ who was perfect and did no sin, willingly, took the place of every chosen child of God given to him of the Father before the foundation of the world. “He made him sin for us, who knew no sin,”—Christ bore our sins in his own body on the tree—so that God was just to impute our sin to Christ and pour out justice upon him. Since Christ gave God’s justice the full payment it demanded, now God’s justice is satisfied toward each and every child for whom Christ died. Now God is just to show his people mercy and because God is just he must and shall give each and every one life in Christ for they are justified. (2 Cor 5: 21: Ga 3:13)

**And God is the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus**—because God did the justifying. He gave his only begotten Son and Christ is God in human flesh who did the justifying.

THE VERY PURPOSE FOR WHICH GOD CREATED THIS WORLD AND SENT HIS SON IS TO DECLARE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD! SO EVERYTHING ABOUT THE WAY CHRIST PUT AWAY OUR SIN AND EVERYTHING ABOUT THE WAY WE ARE MADE RIGHTEOUS IS DONE IN RIGHTEOUSNES.

In closing let’s here what the Spirit of God concludes:

1. The principle of faith excludes all boasting—

**Romans 3: 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.**

God is faithful—the triune God entered covenant to do this work for his people. In faith the Father trusted the Son to do this work to manifest his righteousness and justify his people; in faith Christ finished the work trusting the Father to justify him as his holy and righteous servant by raising him from the dead—and continues to accomplish the pleasure of the LORD by calling and sending his preachers, teaching his people; in faith the Spirit of God creates God’s elect in newness of life, giving repentance and faith to lay hold of Christ; in faith the believer confesses he did nothing but sin and God in Christ accomplished his Salvation. Therefore, by the law of faith the sinner does not boast, but glories only in the faith of God.

2. Here is the conclusion of the whole matter,

**Romans 3: 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.**

3. All God’s elect--whether Jew or Gentile—are justified by God through faith in Christ.

**Romans 3: 29 Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: 30 Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision [the natural born Jew] by faith, and uncircumcision [the natural born Gentile] through faith.**

The Gentile did not have the ten commandments. Abraham is the example used in Romans 4 and the law was not given on Mt. Sinai until 430 years after God made his everlasting covenant with Abraham imputing the righteousness of Christ to Abraham because by God’s grace Abraham was made righteous in Christ through faith—without the law. What was Abraham’s rule of life since he did not have the ten commandments? His rule of life is the believers rule of life today—faith which worketh by love.

4. The Spirit answers an objection.

**Romans 3: 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.**

The Spirit of God is not now undoing everything he declared through Paul up to this point. He is not saying that the believer establishes the law by our obedience and law-keeping. He has proven before that is impossible to do by our deeds.

Romans 8: 3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: 4 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Establish means “to make stand”—Christ because he established the law for us by his obedience.

Isaiah 42:21: The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

“By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”—Christ established the law by his obedience.

Concerning the law Christ said, “I am not come to destroy but to FULFILL.”—Christ established the law by his obedience.

When God works grace in the heart of his child through the gospel, he “Casts down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST.” (2 Cor 10: 5) We believe that by Christ’s obedience we have established the law of God in perfect righteousness. So in verse 31, the Spirit of God anticipating the objection of legalists, states through Paul, “**Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.** [through faith.]” The believer born of the Spirit of God is truly the only one who delights in the law of God. We so delight in God’s law, that we rest in the only one who has or could establish it for us, that is: Jehovah Tsidkenau—the Lord Jesus Christ—the LORD our Righteousness. Our righteousness is not based on the righteousness of Christ, Christ is our Righteousness.

**Application:** Now something that important sounds like a subject we ought to be hearing preached every time we attend a church service. Yes, we should! The very God before whom you and I will stand, has given this earthen vessel the charge to preach to you this one subject—Christ and him crucified—every time I stand before you.

This IS the gospel. From now to my dying day, as long as God will have me to preach the gospel, I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. So everyone here, heed God’s word, Turn from you, turn from your trying to make yourself righteous by your law-keeping, and believe on Christ.

Amen!