Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

How to Be Right with God, Part 2
Scripture: Romans 3:21-25a
Code: 45-30

And so, as we're looking at Romans chapter 3, we're looking at what God says about life and death and heaven and hell and salvation, faith and love and justification. All the great doctrinal terms are here in this marvelous epistle to the Romans. Now, as we come to chapter 3 verses 21 to 25, we've entitled this section "How to Be Right with God." “How to Be Right with God.” Now for some of us who know the Lord Jesus

Christ and have known Him for a long time, this is going back to basics. And it might be that at some point in time as we discuss these things we get a little bit inattentive. We wander a little bit because we're so very familiar with the terms, we're so very familiar with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And yet what a sad commentary it is on how easy it is for us to drift away from that initial joy that we knew when we discovered these tremendous truths. For some people, you see, these truths become the end of a lifelong search. For some people these are the most marvelous, incomprehensible, fantastic and thrilling things they've ever known of. And perhaps there are some in our fellowship tonight who having heard these things for the first time will have discovered the great truth for which you have been searching your life long.

Let me read to you verses 21 through the first part of verse 25: “But now the 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 in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe for there is no difference: 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 hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.” And we'll stop at that point.

Now, this tells us how to be right with God. And that is man's basic question. I remember being on an airplane and having a man next to me notice that I was reading the Bible and say to me, "Sir, excuse me, but you wouldn't know how a person could have a right relationship with God, would you?" And I said, "I think I can help you with that." That is a question that has been on the heart of man throughout all of his history.

As we saw in our look last week at this passage in what amounts to part one of this study, Job asked that question. He gave words to that longing of many hearts in chapter 9 verse 2 when it says: "How

should a man be right with God?" How can a person be right with God?

The Philippian jailer put it another way. He said to the apostle Paul, "What must I do to be saved?"

The Jews hearing Peter preach of sin and the Savior on Pentecost put the same question in other words. They said: "What shall we do?" Acts 2:37.

Paul, lying on the ground struck blind, with his face in the dirt, stopped in his tracks in the middle of pursuing the persecution of Christians, looked up and said: "Lord, what will You have me to do?" And essentially that's the same question. What do I do to get right with God?

Bildad, the Shuhite, in the book of Job, echoed Job's question. His cry was: "How can a man be right with God?" or, "How can he be clean?" Same question.

When the message of repentance was preached by John the Baptist, the people cried: "What shall we do then?"

And when our Lord had fed the crowd at Galilee and they sought only the material fulfillment and ignored the eternal issues, He condemned them for their sin and they responded in the sixth chapter of John by saying, "What shall we do then that we might work the works of God?"

You see, all of those times and places and people are echoing the same question: What do you do to get right with God?

In Acts 16 when Paul was in Philippi, Paul and Silas were followed by a demon-possessed girl. And as she followed them in her demon-possessed condition, she said this: "These men are the servants of the Most High God who show us the way of salvation." How interesting that even in her demon-possessed condition she followed those who showed the way to be right with God.

Even Thomas asked that very same key question in the fourteenth chapter of John, "Lord," he said, "we know not where You're going and how can we know the way?" How do we get to God?

In the Old Testament, the people who lived in the time of Micah the prophet, chapter 6 verses 6 and 7, said: "With what shall I come before the Lord? With what shall I bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams or with ten thousand of...rivers of oil? Shall I give the first born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" In other words, they were saying: What does God want to make me right with Him? Even to the point of slaying my own son, my own daughter?

The rich young ruler asked the very same question in Matthew 19. He says: "What good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" And then a lawyer came to Jesus burdened with the issue of how to be right with God and he said, "What shall I do, Master, to inherit eternal life?" Luke chapter 10.

The psalmist, looking at the depth of his sin, cried out of the depths of that obvious sinfulness: "If Thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity, 0 Lord, who shall stand?" And later he said, "In Thy sight shall no man living be made right."

And so, man throughout all of his history has sought to be right with God, and wondered how. That's why there's religion all across the earth. That's why man is inevitably a religious creature, because he seeks even in the midst of his blindness and out of the reality that he is disconnected from the God of the universe, and that he is aware of his sinfulness and that he anticipates judgment, he seeks to be made right with God. And the religions of the world offer him a plethora of wrong answers.

Now, this brings us to our text in Romans 3 verse 20. How is a man made right with God? Well, verse 20 says it's not by the deeds of the law. In other words, it isn't by any good thing that man does. It isn't by any religious thing that man does. Isaiah the prophet said: "All man's righteousness, the best he does, is as filthy rags." So if a man is to be right with God, it isn't going to come from the man. What did we learn last time? It's going to come from whom? From God. And so we pose the question that we posed in our last study: How can a person be right with God when God is holy and we are sinful? How can we overcome that disparity? How can we who are sinful be made right with a God who is infinitely holy? That is man's age-old longing.

Look with me for a moment at 1 Kings chapter 8, 1 Kings chapter 8 verse 46. And Solomon here is praying on behalf of his people. And it says in 1 Kings 8:46: "If they sin against Thee, for there is no man who sinneth not, and Thou be angry with them and deliver them to the enemy so that they carry

them away captives unto the land of the enemy far or near, yet if they shall take it to their hearts in the land where they were carried captive and repent and make supplication unto Thee in the land of them who carried them captives, saying, We have sinned and have done perversely, we have committed wickedness and so return unto Thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and if they pray unto Thee toward their land which Thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which Thou hast chosen and the house which I have built for Thy name, then hear Thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven, Thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause and forgive Thy people who have sinned against Thee and all their transgressions in which they have transgressed against Thee and give them compassion before them who carried them captive that they may have compassion on them, for they are Thy people and Thine inheritance whom Thou broughtest forth out of Egypt from the midst of the furnace of iron, that Thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of Thy servant and unto the supplication of Thy people Israel to hearken unto them in all that they call forth unto Thee, for Thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth to be Thine inheritance."

Now what is he saying? He is saying on behalf of his people, God, when they come to You and they seek to be made right, make them right, respond to them. When they're in the midst of their captivity and they look on their situation and they reach out to You, reach out to them, make them right. And Solomon is affirming that it only can come from God's side.

A little girl that fell into the well, and the story was in Reader's Digest, was wonderfully rescued from the well by her father. And a reporter asked her how it was that her father was able to rescue her. And the little four-year-old said it was easy, "I just reached up my arms as far as I could and my Daddy did the rest." There's a very real sense in which that is what Solomon prays for, that when it comes to the point in time when the people reach their arms up as far as they can, may the heavenly Father do the rest, may God make them right.

Jeremiah sought God on behalf of the same thing in the forty-second chapter of Jeremiah and verse 2. It says: "They said unto Jeremiah the prophet, ‘Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee and pray for us to the Lord thy God, even for all this remnant, for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us, that the Lord thy God may show us the way in which we may walk and the thing that we may do.’ Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, ‘I have heard you. Behold, I will pray unto the Lord your God according to your words and it shall come to pass that whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it unto you, I will keep nothing back from you.’ Then they said to Jeremiah, ‘The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us if we do not even according to all the things for which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the Lord our God to whom we send thee, that it may be

well with us when we obey the voice of the Lord our God.'"

Now, they said You go to God, Jeremiah, and you say to God: How do we get right with You, God? And whatever God says is the answer, you come and tell us and we'll do it. We want to be right with God. And so, he went before God and in verse 7: "It came to pass after ten days that the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah." He got his answer, from God.

Go over to verse 20 and you'll find out how the people responded to it, "For ye dissembled in your hearts when ye sent me unto the Lord." In other words, you had a divided heart. "You said, 'Pray for us, to the Lord our God and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, we declare unto you and we will do it.' And now I have this day declared it to you but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God nor anything for which He sent me unto you. Now therefore, know certainly that ye shall die.'"

Now, what happened? The people said, we want to know the way to God. Jeremiah came back ten days later and said, here's the way, here's what God says. And the people said we don't want it. Typical? And I must add at this point, this is still going on. People around the world are saying: How do you get right with God? How do you get right with God? And when you come along and tell them how to get right with God, they turn around and walk away. And you have to face that. It isn't enough to know how to be right with God, it is only enough to obey and to respond. Men seek the answer but they don't always want the answer they get. Most of the Jews at Pentecost who said, "What shall we do?" when they found out, turned around and went away. Most of those who heard John the Baptist weren't really interested in responding when they got their answer. The crowd at Galilee hearing Jesus, when they said to Him, "What do we do to work the works of God?" and He said to them, "Here's what you do, eat My flesh and drink My blood," turned and went away.

All the people of Micah's day didn't respond either. And the rich young ruler didn't respond. And the lawyer didn't respond. And Jeremiah's people didn't respond. And so, we learn something very basic about man. He wants to know how to be right with God but he doesn't always respond when he finds out the truth. But we must proclaim the truth continually. And that's what we shall do again tonight in Romans 3:21 to 25.

Verse 21, a brief review: "But now." And I cannot tell you how important those two words are. Circle them in your Bible because they mark a marvelous transition in the book. Up to now it's been sin and ugliness and hopelessness and blackness and darkness and despair and hell and damnation and judgment. And man is at the bar of God's judgment and he has no defense. Verse 19 says his mouth

is stopped. Verse 20 says by his own works he cannot be right with God. That's what justification means, he can't be right, it can't come from his side. And then, "But now," and we meet a transition, "the righteousness of God," which is very different, as we saw, than the righteousness of man, "apart from the law is manifested." When man has come to the end of his resource, when man has come to the limit of all of his capability and he realizes he can't be right with God, then God moves in with the righteousness that comes from above. Only God can make a man right with Him. Man can't do it on his own. And you have to realize, people, that this is a monumental realization because all the religions of the entire globe and all of the religions that have ever existed or ever will exist apart from the true Christian faith have all said that men can be right with God by their own effort. And they're all lies. There are only two kinds of religions: the religion that says man can be righteous and the one that says man can't be righteous, and that's the biblical one.

And so, God in love provides a righteousness which man of his own accord can never generate. And this is the love of God. We've had three chapters now of the fury of God. I don't know if you've ever read any of the ancient writings of Homer and maybe read the story of Hector, the great warrior, who was saying farewell to his wife to go off to battle. As it turned out in the battle, in terms of mythology, Hector met Achilles and Achilles slaughtered him so it was the last time he'd ever see his wife, the last time he would ever see his little child. And he wanted to embrace his little child as he was leaving and he reached out and the little child looked at him and saw him with all of the fierce armor all over his body and a helmet on his head and he turned and cried and buried his head in his mother's shoulder. And so, Hector took off all of his armor, every bit of it, and then reached out for the little fella and of course he jumped into his father's arms and embraced him. Found the father of his love behind all that armor.

And I believe there's a very real sense in which when you come to Romans 3:21 God takes the armor off. He's not the warrior anymore of the first three chapters; He's the loving Father. He's been the judge, He's been the executioner. His fury has been poured out in the promises of those first three chapters. But now behind all that armor we find a God of love who reaches out with a righteousness and manifests it to men who on their own could never ever be righteous.

Now, what kind or righteousness is this? What is it that makes us right with God? How is it to be described? Watch how Paul describes it.

First of all, it is apart from legalism. It is apart from legalism. Verse 21 says it's apart from the law. And here Paul uses the word "law" to refer to legalism, legal effort, law-keeping on a human level. It is apart from any works of man. It is apart from any goodness of man, any religiosity, any spiritual ritual,

any innate quality of man. It's apart from any legalism in the sense that you on your own can live up to the law of God and satisfy God.

Secondly, last time, we saw that it is built on revelation. It is witnessed by the law and the prophets. And that's simply a euphemism for the Old Testament. While it is apart from legalism, it is built on the Old Testament. In fact, the whole Old Testament was to show men that they couldn't be righteous on their own, right? Back to verse 20: "The law was given that we might have the knowledge of sin," it says. The law was to damn and condemn people. That's the same thing Jesus reiterated in the Sermon on the Mount. You remember when He came and He preached the Sermon on the Mount? He told them this is God's law. This is what you do but this is what God says. This is what you do but this is what God says. And He just kept telling them what God's standard was. Why? So that they'd keep God's standard? No, so they'd know they couldn't. And if they'd have responded right to that sermon they'd have said, well, we can't keep that standard. And He would have said, exactly, and that's why I'm here. Because you can't reach God by your righteousness, God has brought His righteousness to you. And it is offered as a gift.

So, it is built on the Old Testament. There are, by the way, three hundred and thirty, at least, prophecies in the Old Testament of Jesus Christ. So His coming has the embodiment of the righteousness of God as the fulfillment of the Old Testament.

Thirdly, we saw it is acquired by faith. Verse 22: "This righteousness of God is by faith." In other words, it doesn't come by works, it comes by faith. And those two are distinct. Works is something you do. It is an effort that you do embark on. Faith is something God does and you believe it, you accept it, you trust in it. It is done by Him and you accept that He did it and you don't have to add anything to it. For example, on the cross Jesus said it is (What?) finished. “It is finished.” He had accomplished the work of salvation, it was done. And the Bible simply says if you believe, you're redeemed. If you believe that He finished the work, if you believe in the significance of what He did, who He was and dying on the cross and rising from the dead, that's all that's necessary. He did it all, you need only believe it. It is acquired by faith. "If thou shalt confess Jesus as Lord and believe in thine heart that God has raised Him from the dead," Romans 10:9 and 10, "thou shalt be (What?) saved, for with the heart man believeth unto salvation."

From the Old Testament to the New Testament, we hear this same refrain: "The just shall live by (What?) faith." And that's why you have Romans...or rather, that's why you have Hebrews chapters 11 and 12 and you have all of those heroes of faith: "By faith, this one," "by faith, that one," "by faith, by faith, by faith," all the way through the eleventh chapter. And then in chapter 12 it says, look,

seeing we have so great a cloud of witnesses, let us, and the implication is, also live by (What?) faith. If there are this many people who can attest to the validity of a life of faith then that's the kind of life we ought to live, a life of faith. And he closes verse 2 of Hebrews 12 by saying: "Looking unto (What?)Jesus." Now listen to this one: "The author and finisher (Of What?) of our faith." You want to hear something amazing? Even your faith isn't yours. Guess who authored it? And who finishes it? Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 2:8 and 9, it says: "For by grace are you saved through (What?)faith." And what's the next line? "That not of yourselves." What not? Even the faith is a gift from God. Faith comes by hearing a speech about Jesus Christ, it says in Romans. Faith is a gift of God. We depend utterly and totally on God even for the granting of saving faith, because a man could not even muster such faith on his own. It is all from God.

In Isaiah 61:10 there's a marvelous verse. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord. My soul shall be joyful in my God, for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Isn't that great? God did it. God did it.

So, the righteousness of God is manifest to us from heaven. It is apart from legalism. It is built on revelation. It is acquired by, faith.

Now, let's come to the fourth point. It is provided for all. It is provided for all. Verse 22 says: "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ, unto all them who are believing." You see, the provision is made for anyone who believes. It says in the fourth chapter of Romans and the eleventh verse that Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had received yet uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe. Now the key understanding here is simply this, anybody who can be...anybody can be saved who believes...who believes. It's that broad. In Acts chapter 13 verse 39 it says: "All that believe are justified." All that believe are justified." Anyone who believes. You say, "It doesn't matter how bad they are?" It doesn't matter how bad they are. It doesn't matter how irreligious they are? No, it doesn't matter how irreligious they are. That is not the issue. It is: Do they believe, no matter what the past is.

Galatians 22:16: "Knowing that a man is not made right with God with the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ even we have believed in Jesus Christ that we might be right with God by faith and not by works, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be made right with God." Anyone who believes. The irreligious? That's right. The God haters, the criminals, the murderers, the child molesters, the rapists, the brutal, the bitter, the religious hypocrites, the false teachers, the false

prophets, anybody who believes. Jesus said: "Him that cometh unto Me I'll in no wise (What?)cast out." Anyone who believes. And Paul even says at the end of verse 22, "For there is no (What?)no difference."

You say, "Now wait a minute. I'm... I'm a very moral person." You're no different than a rapist. "Wait a minute." No, that's right. You say, "I'm a... I'm a good person, I belong to philanthropies, I give my money to poor people, I work hard, I'm a good provider, I love my wife, I love my kids, I'm a basically good person." No, you're just the same as a child molester and a rapist and a murderer and an irreligious, God-hating, Christ cursing, hell-bound sinner.

Well, that's very hard for people to understand. But that's what it says. You see, because they think that good is relative. But good is not relative, it's absolute. But evil is relative. I mean there are some people technically worse than others, but they're all so bad that they're infinitely far from God. And we're included too, aren't we before we come to Christ? There's no difference.

You say, "Well, can God save anybody?" Sure because there's no difference. It's that we're all in the same thing; we're all wretched, vile, godless sinners. Oh, there may be a relative difference in the way we appear on the surface but the fact is we're all in the same category. So if He can save any of us, guess what? He can save all of us. And so, if somebody comes along and says, "Well, You can't save me; I'm too far gone." No, no, there's no difference, there's absolutely no difference at all.

And then he kind of qualifies that even further. In verse 23, he says: "Because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Any human being on the face of the earth who comes short of the glory of God is in the same boat as everybody else. You know, it would be like taking the whole city of Los Angeles and lining them up on the beach at San Pedro and saying, we're going to have a contest today. We're going to see who can jump to Catalina. Now you know something, everybody can get back as far as they wanted to and run as far as they want and everybody could jump. Some people would stumble before they got to the water. Some people would get out about 2 feet. Some people, professional athletes who know how to long jump, might get out 24 or 25 feet. But nobody's going to land at Catalina. And that is exactly what it's saying here. It doesn't matter what the relative variables are, you are so far from God's glory you're all in the same boat. And the wonderful point of this verse here, and I think it's misapplied very often. It's not trying to prove to us how far from God we are, it's trying to prove to us how savable we all are because we're all in the same situation. I mean, it would be like saying, well, I... I'm certainly better than other people, I... And making a comparison like this: Just take the height of everybody in the city of Los Angeles. Now we have little midgets and dwarfs and little tiny children. (I remember one time I went to a sideshow and I saw an 18-inch-tall lady.) And

in a... The other day in our service here we had a basketball player from Biola College who is seven-feet-eight. And if you saw... sat in his section, you saw him. And imagine all of us saying, well, what is the standard? Well, the standard is the nearest star. Oh, the nearest star... Well, seven-foot-eight is a long way from the nearest star. And even the nearest star, dear one, cannot approach the infinite holiness of God.

You see evil is evil is evil and everybody is in the same boat, infinitely separated from holy God. So salvation is provided for all because everybody is in the same category. Not only does everybody need it but God is able to save everybody who believes. Tremendous truth. And, you know, some of the people we think are the best of the sinners in truth are the worst. You know if you-, for example looked at a person like Paul, and he gave his testimony, he might come and stand up and say: "I just want to introduce myself (this would be before his conversion) I'm very religious. I was circumcised on the eighth day. I'm of the stock of Israel. I'm of the tribe of Benjamin. I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews. As touching the law, I am a Pharisee. (In other words, keeping all the minutiae of the law.) Concerning zeal, why, I persecute the heretical church. Touching the righteousness in the law, I'm blameless."

Now, that sounds like a pretty good fella. And you know what he said about himself? First Timothy, "I am the chief of (What?) sinners." So there's no way to change our situation and there's no way to think of one better than the other. All have sinned and fallen short.

Now, what does it mean? And by the way, that means everybody sins. When some guy comes along and says that he doesn't sin or he knows somebody that doesn't sin, or you don't have to sin, that's contradicting the Word of God. But it says here they've come short of the glory of God. Now, God's glory is God's perfection and men come short of that. I mean, it's obvious. They fall short of the divine standard. They lack. To fall short means to be destitute of, or to lack. It's a term used of the prodigal. It refers to a condition where you don't have anything, no resources. Man fails to live up to God's glorious, holy standard. But God can redeem him because everybody's in that same boat. And if God can redeem anybody He can redeem everybody who comes in faith.

Now, that takes us to a fifth wonderful concept in the doctrine of salvation. It is apart from legalism. It is built on revelation, acquired by faith, provided for all. Number five, it is given freely through grace, given freely through grace. Verse 24 says: "Being justified," and that term again means to be right with God, “we become right with God freely by His grace." Now I believe verse 24 connects back with verse 22, that the righteousness of God is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, then verse 24, being justified freely by His grace. And the intervening is a parenthesis to

describe how it is that everybody can be saved because they're all the same. Then back to the main point in verse 24, that those who believe are made right with God freely by His grace.

Now I believe we are made right with God, an actual acquittal, an actual imputation. And how? Freely by His grace. Freely means as a gift. The idea is: Without payment, without human merit. It's like Isaiah 55, "Come and buy wine and bring no money." You know that one. It's free. In fact, the term there, "freely," is translated "without a cause," in John 5. It's translated "Christ died," and that's Galatians 2:21, "needlessly or for nothing." And it means "for nothing, without a cause, without a price." We were justified without any price to pay on our part. So if you think you've got to earn your way in, or you've got to believe "plus this" like Herbert W. Armstrong says, "We're saved by grace in Christ plus keeping the Ten Commandments," that's a lie right out of the pit of hell. Because it discredits God's grace, and grace mingled with law isn't grace.

And so, we are saved freely by grace and grace is undeserved love granted to the guilty. And by the way, that's a nice term as far as Paul's concerned. He used it a hundred times in his epistles.

You say, "Well, if it's free and if it's given to us free and all we do is believe and God graciously gives us His salva-tion, then it's free, it didn't cost anything?" I didn't say that. I said it didn't cost you anything. It cost God a lot. God's loving, gracious act is granted to us freely but it was extremely costly to Him.

Verse 24, the only way it could come to us freely was through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. What does that mean? That means that somebody had to pay a price. What does it mean to redeem? Have you ever had Blue Chip stamps? Or coupons where it says redeemable? What does that mean? It means you can use it as money and you buy something. Redemption is to ransom by the payment of a price. There was a price. You don't pay it. And I don't pay it. But somebody paid it. And verse 24 says Jesus Christ paid it. It's the idea of buying a slave out of the slave market in order to set him free. It's the idea of the kinsman redeemer in the wonderful story of Ruth and Boaz. Somebody paid a price. Who paid it? Christ Jesus paid it. 0, I like that. And the Greek text could allow us to read it: "Through the redemption that is by Christ Jesus."

So, man's a slave to sin. Man cannot be righteous on his own. God provides a righteousness by faith. The only way God can do that is for Christ to pay the price to free that man. The man is a prisoner. He is sentenced to die. Somebody's got to pay his penalty. And that was the redeeming price paid by the blessed Lord Jesus Christ. He paid the price to set us free.

It says in 1 Timothy 2:6 that Christ Jesus gave Himself a ransom. What was the price? It was Himself, wasn't it? He had to die in our place. And oh, the Scripture is so filled with that thought; I wish we had time to cover myriad scriptures, but just this one. First Peter 1:18, "For as much as you know that you're not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver, or gold, from your vain manner of life, but you were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as a lamb without blemish and without spot." What did God say the price had to be? "The wages of sin is (What?) death." The price was death, and Christ died that death, shed His blood. And so the righteousness of God is available apart from legalism, built on revelation, acquired by faith, provided for all, given freely through grace, accomplished by redemption. And then this, paid for with blood.

Verse 25: "God set forth Christ to be the covering over our sins through His blood." God required death. God required a sacrifice. Jesus became that sacrifice. You see, God could not just forgive you and me and not deal with justice. Love could forgive but justice had to be met and justice required a penalty and the penalty had to be paid. And so, literally, Jesus becomes the covering. He becomes the satisfaction, that's the word *hilastrion*, the propitiation. It means "a place where sins are blotted out." It was used to refer to the Mercy Seat. When the priest went in the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, and sprinkled the blood on the Mercy Seat, that was the place where sins were blotted out. And Christ became the place where sins are blotted out. He became the *kappora*, the Mercy Seat. He, by His blood, provided satisfaction. And so we are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, a lamb without spot and without blemish.

The cross, then, is everything. God's righteousness couldn't come to us apart from the cross. Jesus died in our place. Beloved, I hope you hear what the Scripture's saying. You were hell bound; the first three chapters of Romans describe you. And we're all the same, there's no difference. And we could not be right with God on our own and so God came down and He had a plan to make us right. And He gave us His righteousness. You say, "How could He do that?" He had to deal with our sin first and the penalty had to be paid and it was paid in the death of Jesus Christ. And then again it says in verse 25, and this is the final word, "This is appropriated through faith," through faith. And there we are again back to that most important of all truths that we saw also in verse 22, that salvation comes by faith, by believing, not by anything we do. It is God. It says in Colossians 2-12, it is God who has done this for us. It is buried with Him in baptism. It is risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God. Faith is God operating. I love that.

In Philippians 1, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him but to suffer." If you believe, it has been given to you to believe. It's all of God. It's all of God.

But, may I hasten to add that it requires a true faith, a genuine faith? Now, this exchange of our unrighteousness for His righteousness is marvelously summed up in 2 Corinthians 5:21. One of the greatest verses in the New Testament, it says this: "For He (that is God) hath made Him (that is Christ)..." God has made Christ "who knew no sin to become sin for us, that we might be made right with God through Him." That's the plan.

Now, let me just say this. Having said all of this, I don't understand it. OK? Because it's a supernatural, divine miracle, but I confess to you that I believe it and that's what God asks.

Horatius Bonar wrote:

Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul.

Not what my toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole.

Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God.

Not all my prayers and sighs and tears can bear my awful load.

Thy grace alone, 0 God, to me can pardon speak.

Thy power alone, 0 Son of God, can this sore bondage break.

No other works save thine. No other blood will do.

No strengths save that which is divine can bear me safely through.

That's right. It's all of God. And so we are not left in Romans 1, 2 and 3, but we are brought to Romans 3:21 and the righteousness of God is given to us by faith. That's what it means to be saved. It's not what we've done. It's what He has done for us. Let's pray.

Father, bring those that You would desire to come, and bless us all. We thank You that You have met us in Your Word and You've redeemed us by Your gift of Jesus Christ. Thank You that You've just not saved us but You've made us Your sons and You've made us as right as we can be, as right with You as Christ is right with You, for we are brothers and joint heirs with Him. Thank You for that

righteousness. Help us to live up to it in our everyday practice. May our living be what it ought to be as we obey the One who granted to us eternal righteousness. And, Father, we pray for those who have not yet taken that gift. May they take it before it's too late. And we'll thank You. And all of God's people said amen. God bless you.

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