

Introduction:

Those who have been with us every Sunday this month have learned some cool things about the gospel, the good news of God. We've learned we can be unashamed of the gospel, just like Paul was according to **Romans 1:16**. We can be unashamed because the gospel is unparalleled; it is the power of God. We can be unashamed because the gospel is unsurpassed; it is the means to salvation. We can be unashamed because the gospel is unlimited; it is for all who believe. We can be unashamed because the gospel is unbiased; no matter the tone of our skin, the accent of our language, or the nationality of our heritage, we are one blood, one humankind, and the gospel is for all.

However, if you're like me, there is still this nagging concern at the back of your mind. All of this is all well and good, but what if I mess it up? What if I don't do it exactly right? What if I turn to the gospel, but don't measure up? What if I can't quite make it? This leads us to our final look at our year's theme passage. It takes us into the very next verse—**Romans 1:17**. Paul explains he was unashamed of the gospel because in it is revealed the righteousness of God. The gospel is the proclamation of God's righteousness, not ours. Do you know what this means? It means we can be unashamed because the gospel is Untarnished.

Sadly, here is the problem many of us have. Many of us, no matter how much we learn about the love, mercy, and grace of God continue to believe the good news is "If you become really, really righteous, God might just save you." That is not the gospel. That is not the good news. The good news is "God is righteous; He will save you." The gospel reveals God's righteousness, not yours, therefore it is Untarnished. Praise the Lord!

Discussion:

I. What is the righteousness of God?

- A. Unfortunately, this is a much deeper question than it sounds like. On the surface, we might all think that since righteousness is rightness, doing what is right, then the righteousness of God refers to His always doing what is right. In a sense that is true, but it actually misses a huge part of the equation. If we simply view this as God always does what is right, we might see God's righteousness as the same as His holiness or His sinlessness. If that were the case, then the gospel is merely revealing that God always does the right thing, the holy thing. I'd like to take you a bit deeper on this question.
- B. In **Romans 3:21**, Paul actually comes directly back to this declaration that the gospel reveals or manifests the righteousness of God. The gospel does so completely separate from the Law. However, Paul then explains the Law and the Prophets, that is, the Old Testament, bear witness to the righteousness of God. With that in mind, I'd like to go back to the Old Testament and show you what the Law and the Prophets bear witness to as the righteousness of God. My goal is to demonstrate that we can't mess up the gospel. We can't tarnish the gospel. The gospel reveals God's righteousness, not ours. With this in mind, I want to give you a limited survey from the Old Testament. I'm not going to show you every passage that demonstrates the righteousness of God. I want to share 10 passages with you. If you are new to the Bible, I know this will be a little fast and a little overwhelming. I want to give this survey, not to confuse you with passage names and different stories, but to demonstrate this is a theme throughout the Old Testament. By the time we are done with this survey, we will see that God's righteousness is not merely His doing everything right. Rather, it refers to a very particular right thing He does for His people.
  1. **1 Samuel 12:7-11**: Samuel is going to explain all the righteous deeds of the LORD, that He performed for Israel. Notice, Samuel's argument is not to look at how God always lived according to His law and never committed sin. Rather, the righteous deeds of the Lord were His deeds of deliverance for Israel because they were part of His covenant, not because they deserved it or were righteous themselves.
  2. **Psalms 31:1-2**: Deliverance, rescue, and salvation are God's actions of righteousness.
  3. **Psalms 71: 2, 15-16**: Again, deliverance, rescue, and salvation are God's actions of righteousness. When the psalmist is telling of God's righteous acts, it is not His acts of obedience to His own law or doing what is right, it is His acts of salvation and deliverance.
  4. **Psalms 98:1-3**: God reveals His righteousness when He reveals His salvation. Notice also how His righteousness is connected to His steadfast love and faithfulness.
  5. **Psalms 119:123-124**: Salvation is God's righteous promise. It is connected to God's steadfast love.

6. **Psalm 85:10-11:** God's steadfast love, faithfulness, and righteousness are all connected and parallel.
  7. **Isaiah 56:1:** God tells the Israelites to keep justice and do righteousness, because His salvation and His righteousness are coming. His righteousness being revealed is paralleled with His salvation coming.
  8. **Psalm 35:24:** God's righteousness is the basis for His vindication of His people.
  9. **Psalm 143:** In **vs. 1**, the psalmist says that answering in righteousness is God answering in His faithfulness. In **vs. 2**, he prays that God will not enter into judgment, because the psalmist is not personally righteous, in fact, no one is. In **vss. 3-4**, the enemy is pursuing the psalmist. Perhaps this has been allowed because of the psalmist's lack of personal righteousness admitted in the previous verse. In **vss. 5-6**, the psalmist reaches out to God because He remembers the ancient acts of God—surely those ancient acts of deliverance. In **vss. 7-8**, he begs for the steadfast love of the Lord to respond quickly. In **vss. 9-10**, he explains what he hopes to receive when God answers in faithfulness and righteousness. He expects to receive deliverance. Finally, he brings it to conclusion in **vss. 11-12**, by claiming it is for the sake of God's name that he wants to be delivered. That it is based on God's righteousness, which he parallels to God's steadfast love. And all of this will happen because he is a servant of the Lord.
  10. **Daniel 9:7, 16, 18:** Daniel is longing for God to deliver Israel from their Babylonian captivity. Notice, he doesn't claim Israel has become righteous. Rather, to Israel belongs open shame because of their treachery (**vs. 7**). Then in **vs. 16**, he asks for God's anger to turn from them according to God's righteous acts. Think about that. If God's righteousness is merely Him always doing the right thing according to the Law, isn't that a surprising request for Daniel to make? Finally, in **vs. 18**, Daniel brings it home saying, this request is not because of Israel's righteousness but because of God's mercy. Daniel understands, if Israel is to be delivered, it will be because of God's righteousness, not Israel's.
- C. But what was that righteousness? It was not merely God always doing the right thing, being sinless, being holy. God's righteousness is His faithfulness to His covenant promises. It is His steadfast love to His people. And it is all of this demonstrated by His rescue, deliverance, and salvation of His people. This is what the Law and the Prophets bore witness to. This is what the gospel reveals.

## II. How did God reveal His righteousness in the gospel?

- A. This is very simply answered in **Romans 3:22-26**.
- B. We have all, whether Jew or Gentile, sinned and we all fall short of God's glory. But God put forward Jesus, His one and only Son, as a propitiation. That is, as a sacrifice that would appease the wrath of God. He did this by the blood of Jesus. That is, by the death of Jesus on the cross.
- C. And He did all of this apart from the Law in order to show His righteousness now. He passed over former sins. That is, He didn't bring judgment when He could have. He held on patiently so He could sacrifice Jesus in order to not only be just, but to be a justifier of those who put their faith in Jesus.
- D. Think about what that last statement means. If God judged each and every one of us at the moment of our first sin or at the moment of any sin, would He be just? Absolutely. If He enters into judgment with us, we are not personally righteous. We would not stand. And He would be just and right to condemn us, driving us from His presence. But He held on patiently, waiting until the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, so that He would be not only just, but a justifier. That is, based on His name, based on His righteousness, based on His mercy, His steadfast love, His faithfulness, He acted just as He had righteously promised throughout all of history. He has brought salvation and justification. We will not be saved by our righteousness, but by His untarnished righteousness, by His untarnished gospel.

## III. Who is saved by this gospel?

- A. As Paul said in **Romans 1:17** and also in **Romans 3:22, 26**, this gospel brings salvation through the righteousness of God to all who have faith in Jesus.
- B. I know what you are thinking right now. "Awesome! I get the best of both worlds. I can just keep on living in sin, acknowledge Jesus, and I get to be saved." I understand why you might think that. In fact, Paul himself recognized we might think that. Notice what he writes in this very same letter in **Romans 6:1-4**. He essentially asks, "Do we give ourselves license to sin and ignorance because God is saving us by His grace?" The answer, "Absolutely not!" Why is that the answer? Because when we are baptized into Christ we are baptized into His death, dying to sin.
- C. Remember, God's righteousness is not the fact that He always does what is right. God's righteousness is His steadfast love, faithfulness to His covenant promises, salvation, and deliverance. But what is God delivering us from. He is not delivering us from the Egyptians, the Canaanites, or the Babylonians. He is not delivering us from guilt or even hell. He is delivering us from slavery to sin. When I understand what the Gospel is

actually delivering me from, then I realize the Gospel, by definition, is not promising to take me to heaven while I ignore or rebel against God and His will.

- D. What this means is we need to understand an important distinction. There is a big difference between a person surrendering to the Gospel, growing in the Lord, seeking God's righteousness and kingdom who is presently mistaken on some doctrinal matter or who stumbles and falls in sin and the person who says, "Oh good, salvation is by grace so it doesn't matter what we believe, preach, and practice." There is a difference between a person whose heart is set on serving the Lord because of God's gospel who falls prey to temptation and sins and the person who uses grace as a license for sin.

Conclusion:

Friends and neighbors, the gospel is not: Try really, really hard to be really, really righteous, and God just might save you. The gospel is: God is righteous; He will save you. This gospel is untarnished because it is about God's righteousness, not yours. What are you waiting for? Pursue God. Pursue His will. Keep justice. Do righteousness. As Jesus advised in **Matthew 6:33**, seek God's kingdom and righteousness first and foremost. As long as you are doing that, you cannot mess up the gospel. You cannot tarnish. Will you make mistakes? Sure. Will you stumble and fall? Of course. But don't give up on the gospel. Don't quit on Jesus. Don't give in and give yourself license to ignorance and sin. The gospel is about God's righteousness, not yours. You can keep pursuing Him even after you have messed up because you didn't mess the gospel up. I get it. We are ashamed of ourselves sometimes. We should be. We mess up. But we never have to be ashamed of the gospel because it is about God's righteousness, not ours. It is untarnished.