

(Devotional #42) *What is The True Gospel? – The Third Imputation – Part 2*
The Doctrine of Imputed Righteousness

I will rejoice greatly in the LORD, my soul will exult in my God; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation and wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and a bride with her jewels – Isaiah 61:10

They will say of Me, ‘only in the LORD are righteousness and strength.’ Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him will be put to shame. In the LORD all the offspring of Israel will be justified and will glory – Isaiah 45:24-25

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him – 2 Corinthians 5:21

We concluded our last lesson by observing the heroes of Scripture, who when confronted with their own natures – (*their own relative-righteousness*) – always fall short of God’s standard. It seems a man cannot produce the righteousness God demands, so there must be another means by which a righteousness that is acceptable to God can be attained.

I want to look briefly at one other passage that deals with imputed righteousness: Romans 3:21-26. We have touched on some of these verses, but today I want to focus on them as a unit.

ROMANS 3:21 – “*Now APART FROM THE LAW, the Righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.*”

Paul is saying the divine act of imputing righteousness on the basis of faith-alone, is not a new thing, for the Law and the Prophets affirm it. God has saved sinners on the same basis (*i.e., **ON THE BASIS OF THE CROSS***) in the same way (*i.e., **by GRACE THROUGH FAITH***) from the time of Adam to the last person, who will put his faith in Christ-alone, at the end of the Great Tribulation; and we have the Old Testament example of Abram’s testimony to this Biblical truth: “*And Abram believed in Yahweh and righteousness was imputed to him*” – *Genesis 15:6.*

THE CRIMSON THREAD OF SALVATION RUNS CONSISTENTLY THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE OF SCRIPTURE.

Now we must remember, God’s way of saving sinners runs contrary to the way men prefer to think about themselves ... so here is a little theological rule of thumb that may help us understand why some people refuse the free gift of salvation: **MEN DO NOT LIKE TO BE TOLD THEY HAVE NOTHING TO OFFER GOD IN THE WAY OF MERIT.** Men do not like the idea of grace because we naturally **REBEL** when we are told we have **NO MERIT BEFORE GOD.**

ROMANS 3:22 – Human distinctions of ‘*good and better*’ and ‘*better and best*’ fall apart when ‘*relative righteousness*’ is set alongside ‘*God’s righteousness.*’ In this verse, Paul continues the thought of verse 21 with, “*even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe, for there is no distinction*” (*in Christ*).

ROMANS 3:23 – Men, however, do share one thing in common: **ALL ARE SINNERS**, according to the Bible: “**For all sinned and are falling short of the glory of God.**”

Aorist Tense Present Tense

This is an important verse because it makes the point that sin is universal ... **ALL SINNED**: Jew, Gentile, Pharisee, Tax Collector, Rabbi, Thief, Scribe, Prostitute, Sadducee, Philanthropist, Church Member, Republican, Democrat ... **ALL SINNED**. As I mentioned in another lesson, Paul wrote the phrase, ‘*all sinned*’ in the Aorist Tense, but he wrote ‘*are falling short*’ in the Present Tense. This should be understood to mean, ‘*all men, (Good Men and Bad Men) ... ALL MEN* have a

history that is characterized by sin ... and we all are *continually falling short* of God's righteous standard. Paul is telling us, if we are honest, every man and woman can look into the past and see that sin has been a constant companion ... and as for the man who does not understand this, it is his lack of understanding about **WHAT GOD'S STANDARD REALLY IS** that is *the source* of his misunderstanding.

GOD'S STANDARD IS JESUS CHRIST

ABSOLUTE RIGHTEOUSNESS, and **PERFECTION** are **THE MINIMUM STANDARD** – and no one reading these words can meet that standard.

[Did your mother ever say to you: “I don't care what the other kids are doing, you are my son or my daughter”? It's sort of like that ... It doesn't matter how good or bad the other guy is – He is not the standard against which you will be judged.]

We could spend an entire lesson on the verb: '*falling short*.' It is the Greek word ὕστερέω (*pronounced 'hustereo'*). But just so you get an idea of what it means ... (*because it is a dilemma in which we all share*) ... Here are a few examples:

Hustereo ('Falling Short') means:

- '***To come in late***' – That's not a good feeling is it? You're late to the Myerson ... there's that guy with the flashlight ... it's embarrassing.
- '***To be tardy***' – It's not a good thing to be tardy – teachers mark that on report cards.
- '***To be left behind in a race***' – You do not want to be that last guy ... stumbling across the finish line 45-minutes after *the other last guy* finished. You don't want to be that guy; it's not a good feeling.
- '***To fail***' – That's a really nice feeling ... '*failure*.' Everyone loves to fail.
- '***To miss out on something***' – You didn't check your voicemail, so you missed that dinner invitation ... with the Governor ... in Austin ... at the Governor's Mansion.
- '***To be morally deficient***' – No one likes that.

(Okay, One More):

- '***To lack something, to suffer loss, to be devoid of something, to fall short.***' *Hustereo* – It's not a nice word ... yet it is what the Bible says every one of us is doing continually with respect to God's standard of righteousness ... all day, every day.

And as bad as these examples are, '**FALLING SHORT**' is *especially bad* when your eternal salvation is on the line!

ROMANS 3:24 – “*We are being JUSTIFIED as a gift by His grace through the REDEMPTION that is in Christ Jesus.*” What does it mean to be 'JUSTIFIED'? To be JUSTIFIED does **NOT** mean, '**TO BE MADE RIGHTEOUS**' ... but it **DOES** mean, '**TO BE DECLARED RIGHTEOUS**' **LEGALLY** before God' ... 'JUSTIFICATION' it is a legal term.

AT THE VERY INSTANT WE BELIEVE THE GOSPEL MESSAGE, WE ARE 'DECLARED LEGALLY TO BE RIGHTEOUS BEFORE GOD THE FATHER' AS A FREE GIFT UNDER THE PRINCIPLE OF DIVINE IMPUTATION ... AND THE VERY RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST HIMSELF IS CREDITED (imputed) TO BELIEVERS AS IF IT WERE THEIR OWN.

JUSTIFICATION is **THE ACT OF BEING DECLARED RIGHTEOUS** before God's Throne, on the basis of faith-alone in Christ-alone. That man cannot accomplish such a thing for himself should be evident, so let me review one more time what has taken place:

- Because **ALL MEN** are under **SIN**; we bear **THE GUILT OF THE TRANSGRESSION OF ADAM (THE FIRST IMPUTATION: ORIGINAL SIN)**; then on top of that, we have burdened our souls with **OUR OWN PERSONAL SINS**, **AND** we have within us **THE NATURE** of sinful Adam ... **THE OLD SIN NATURE**.

THE OLD SIN NATURE – We all have one! There is this big '**sin-conveyor belt**' inside of every man and woman that just keeps producing sins ... one after another. (*For the older readers, you might envision Lucy Ricardo and the infamous chocolate factory conveyor belt scene.*)

Said another way, '**we come into this world ... A LOST CAUSE.**' But that being said, you are never so far gone that God's grace cannot reach you; and by the same token, apart from His grace, you never can reach Him.

Imagine for a moment you are in a courtroom and the judge has taken his seat. Your case rests solely with him. You are asked to rise so the verdict can be pronounced ... and you hear the judge say, "**I find you NOT GUILTY.**" Now if you truly are not guilty, you're relieved ... but what if you **ARE** guilty and he says, "**I find you NOT GUILTY ... because someone else has paid the penalty for what you did.**" This is exactly what Jesus has done:

- (1) He has borne the penalty for the sins of the world,
- (2) He is the reason God can declare you not guilty, and ...
- (3) He is why God can credit to you the very righteousness of Christ Himself.

Something wonderful has happened in this sin-ridden world, and we are told about it in the Book of Romans ... We are introduced to this wonderful thing by *two little words* that appeared at the beginning of Romans 3:21 ... *and those words are "BUT NOW."*

Paul has spent the first 2½ chapters of Romans laying out the condemnation that rests on the head of every man, Jew and Gentile, and the hopelessness of it all ... but **THANK GOD** for those two words, 'but now' ... because here is what they mean:

- Whereas '*the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness*' (vs. 1:18),
- Whereas '*the human race is without excuse*' (vs. 1:20), and ...
- Whereas '*professing themselves to be wise, men became fools*' (vs. 1:22), and ...
- Whereas '*men exchanged the glory of God for man-made idols*' (vs. 1:23), and ...
- Whereas '*men exchanged the knowledge of God for a lie*' (vs. 1:25), and ...
- Whereas '*God gave mankind over to the lusts of their own hearts, to serve the creation rather than the Creator*' (also vs. 1:25), and ...
- Whereas '*because of these things man has no hope in himself*' ... yet in spite of **ALL THESE THINGS** we read ... **"BUT NOW."**

ROMANS 3:25-26 – **Something has happened!** God has displayed publicly His righteousness in Jesus Christ, who is the propitiatory sacrifice¹ – the One who through His death **SATISFIED** all

¹ Propitiation is the place of forgiveness. It is the Mercy Seat, where the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifice that covered the sins of Israel. In the New Testament sense, it means, God looked at the sin of Adam, and all of our personal sins, then He looked at Jesus on the cross ... and God was Satisfied.

that **GOD'S STANDARD** required. He accomplished this through the shedding of His Blood on Calvary. And though God **NEVER** could be satisfied with you or with me ... ***GOD IS COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH JESUS***, and He is willing ... on the basis of faith-alone ... to impute the righteousness of Christ to you and to me by **DECLARING US RIGHTEOUS** on the basis of the cross.

How can God do this? How can he impute to you and to me the righteousness of Christ? For no other reason than this: ***because He is completely satisfied*** with what Jesus did, both in his earthly life and by his death on the cross – and the resurrection of Jesus was a declaration by God of His complete satisfaction with what Jesus did.

THE DEBT IS PAID. THE PROBLEM OF ORIGINAL SIN IS SOLVED. AND JESUS ALSO HAS PAID FOR OUR PERSONAL SINS SO THAT WHEN GOD LOOKS AT US, HE SEES ONLY THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST.

All we could ever offer to God was a relative righteousness ... a righteousness that is better than some ... and worse than others ... but short of the mark. We cannot produce by any means *'that righteousness that God's righteousness requires Him to require.'* But Jesus could ... and Jesus did ... and God the Father is satisfied.