

How Can God Be Righteous and Justify Sinners?

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Last Week's Points

- God's God-centeredness is displayed in:
- 1) **Creation** from Genesis 1 and Isaiah 43:7,
 - 2) **Exile** from Genesis 3:23-24, and
 - 3) **Redemption** from Ephesians 5:25-32.

Romans 3:19-26:

19. But we know that what the law says, it says to those under the law, so that every mouth might be silenced and the whole world might be brought to trial before God.
20. Therefore, by the works of law no one will be justified before Him, because through law is the knowledge of sin.
21. But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been revealed, being witnessed by the Law and Prophets,
22. the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, for there is no distinction
23. because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,
24. being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus,
25. whom God offered as a mercy-seat sacrifice through faith in his blood as proof of His righteousness because of the overlooking of sins having been previously committed
26. in the patience of God till the proof of His righteousness in the present time in order that he might be just and the justifier of the one having faith in Jesus

God is angry with humanity. He is angry with humanity because they do not glorify Him or worship Him, but ignore Him and defy Him on every level.

Romans 1:18-25 ¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

As that last verse points out, humanity has ultimately exchanged **God-centeredness** for **creature-centeredness**.

No one will be declared righteous as obedient law-keepers at the judgment before God because nobody keeps the law. Rather, the law of God is the standard by which we are declared guilty in God's eyes. Since we are hopeless law-breakers, then law-keeping can never be the basis of our justification or declaration of innocence before God.

Romans 3:19-20 ¹⁹ But we know that what the law says, it says to those under the law, so that every mouth might be silenced and the whole world might be brought to trial before God. ²⁰ Therefore, by the works of law no one will be justified before Him, because through law is the knowledge of sin.

“But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been revealed being witnessed by the Law and Prophets”. **That is to say, in this epoch or age or leg of redemptive history that God has revealed or unveiled a basis for our justification before Him that does not depend on our law-keeping.**

So what is this basis of God declaring sinners righteous?

Romans 3:

22. the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe, for there is no distinction

23. because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God,

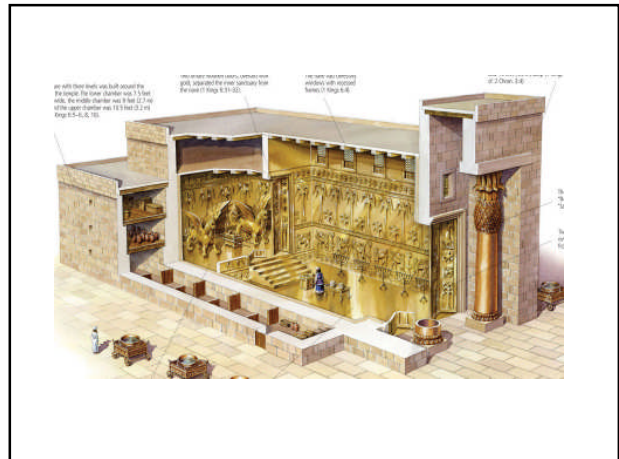
24. being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus

God declares sinners righteous **on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ** as a gift through the redemption Jesus accomplished. This is what is meant by **“Justification by Faith”**.

Now, if it is just or righteous for God to condemn every one of us for our sin, **how can he declare us righteous by faith in Jesus and still be just?**

Romans 3:

25. whom God offered as a mercy-seat sacrifice through faith in his blood as proof of His righteousness because of the overlooking of sins which were previously committed
 26. in the patience of God till the proof of His righteousness in the present time in order that he might be just and the justifier of the one having faith in Jesus



Paul is saying that the death of Jesus on a Roman cross nearly 2000 years ago is where God poured out His wrath as atonement for the sins of all who believe in Jesus.

The death of Jesus is proof that God is violently angry with sinners and that He is a righteous judge and punisher. The sacrifice of Jesus is the basis upon which God justifies sinners and declares them righteous or innocent.

God killed his Son to demonstrate, to prove that God is both righteous and can justify the ungodly. **Therefore, the death of Jesus, which justifies us who believe in his blood, is unswervingly God-centered.**

Acts 17:24-31 ²⁴ The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, ²⁵ nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. ²⁶ And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, ²⁷ that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, ²⁸ for "In him we live and move and have our being"; as even some of your own poets have said, "For we are indeed his offspring."²⁹ Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. ³⁰ The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, ³¹ because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.¹⁶