

ROMANS

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED

GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS REVEALED

Text: Romans 3:21-23

Main preaching point: Justification is the way God declares us righteous in His sight.

INTRODUCTION:

In a marginal note attached to his German translation of Romans, Martin Luther scribbled an insight that arrests the attention of the reader. It reads, "Take heed to what is here. It is the central and most important passage of the epistle, and indeed the entire Scripture." Calvin coincided with Luther in this opinion when he wrote, "There is probably no passage in the whole Bible of greater significance as regards the justifying righteousness of God."¹

These words are a buildup and explanation of all that Paul has been presenting from Chapter 1:17, where he spoke about *the righteousness of God*. In them, the apostle unveils for us *the splendor of the most successful rescue operation ever*. He takes us to the heart of the Gospel.

Beginning in verse 21, Paul first explains that *God's righteousness was historically manifested, but now the righteousness of God...is revealed*. Second, he shows that *God's righteousness is not accompanied by people keeping the Ten Commandments* for he tells us that it is *"apart from the Law."* Third, Paul says that *God's righteousness is in accord with the testimony of the Old Testament*, for he writes in verse 21 it is *"witnessed by the Law and the Prophets."* Paul showed us very vividly in the previous words that all are *under sin (weight, power, and judgment of sin)*, and thus God's wrath abides upon us. He now turns from the *diagnosis* to the *cure* as he turns his attention and ours to *humanity's only hope for escaping God's judgment*.

Man, as he stands before God, has no merit at all. Sin has disqualified him from the heavenly court. Our situation, according to the Word of God, is *unrepairable*. Our sin is *incurable*. Our efforts and our status are *unchangeable*, and our fate is *inevitable*.

But suddenly, into this very dark predicament of corruption and condemnation, a ray of hope emerges. In a flash, hope dawns, and the prospect of rescue breaks in. A dramatic turning point moves us in a bright, positive direction. Everything changes with two tiny words in verse 21, **"But now."** Everything pivots on those two words. **"But now"**—Paul shifts from *condemnation* to *justification*. And what a world of difference there are between these two words. They are polar opposites—**"But now."**

"But" is a conjunction highlighting a transition from the previous bad news to the good news of Christ; **"now"** is an emphatic adverb strengthening the force of what is being said.

¹ As quoted in Rev. W. Burrows, M.A., *The Preacher's Complete Homiletical Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Romans*, 89.

Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones says that “there should be the sound of trumpets when we hear these words.” It introduces to us a total contrast—from *despair* to *hope*, from *tragedy* to *unbelievable joy*. The Christian is someone with a “*but now*” in their experience. That’s what John Newton was singing about when he wrote, “*I once was lost, but now I’m found; was blind, but now I see.*”²

Do you have a “*but now*” in your experience? Can you say today, “I was *this*, but now I’m *that*; I was *there*, but now I’m *here*”? Can you say that? Can you say this is *who I was*, but now, this is *who I am* by the grace of God? I’m trying to contain myself just a little bit; I’ve been meditating on this passage all week long. Preachers are supposed to...

*Begin low, proceed slow, rise higher, take fire,
when most impressed, be self-possessed,
to spirit wed form, sit down in a storm.*

But I confess this morning, I’m so excited! I can barely contain myself—this is good news! What Paul tells us, in a nutshell, is this: the very righteousness of God—that righteousness, which is from God in Christ, i.e., Christ’s perfect righteousness, that righteousness which God *requires* to make sinners right with Himself and *accepted* by Him—God has *provided* that righteousness and made it clear. There is a solution to our problem. There is an answer to the tragic human condition.

We are not to be condemned and separated from God forever. There is a rightness with God. There is the possibility of being joined to God, of being reconciled to God, of knowing God and His forgiveness and His grace. It exists. It’s available. There is hope for alienated people, according to the Word of God. There is an answer to the age-old question: “*How can a man be in the right before God?*” (*Job 9:2*). And this Gospel is what we are called to believe.

OUTLINE:

In these verses, we’re going to see two main headings. In verses 21 through 23 we’re going to consider (1) **God’s righteousness revealed**. And then in verses 24 through 26 we will see (2) **God’s righteousness explained**. Today, I only want to meditate on the first heading—God’s righteousness revealed.

I want us to see together the simplicity and the staggering revelation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. So, what I’m going to do now is take for my headings the very words of Scripture. I’m not going to create new headings; they will emerge from the text. And Paul gives us four insights about the righteousness of God. We’re going to meditate on those together.

²¹But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, ²²even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

EXPOSITION:

The first thing we see is this,

A. GOD’S RIGHTEOUS IS APART FROM THE LAW. (v.21a)

² John Newton, *Amazing Grace*, 1779.

²¹ But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested.

In the original language, it literally reads, "*But now apart from law.*" The definite article is taken out just to speak of law, or really, *the works of men to any rule*. This is a bombshell to the Jewish person. The Jews loved the Law. They loved the Law all their lives. If you look back at Chapter 2 verse 17, you'll notice they "*relied upon the Law.*" According to Chapter 2 verse 18, they were "*instructed out of the Law.*" If you let your eyes drop to Chapter 2 verse 23, it says they "*boast[ed] in the Law.*" And so, to the Jew, *the Law meant everything*. They relied on it. They were taught out of it. They boasted in it.

And now Paul comes along, and he says something *radical*; he says something almost *shocking*. He says, in essence, the righteousness of God is something that has nothing to do with rule-keeping or the Law. It's in a category all by itself.

The Law has no relevance in obtaining *the righteousness of God*. This righteousness is "*apart from the Law*"—separate from the Law, wholly without the aid of the Law, completely separate from our own personal obedience and faulty self-righteous strivings—which are always defective—to keep the Ten Commandments. The righteousness God *demand*s, and God *require*s, IS in a category all by itself.

Now I said this was a bombshell to the Jew, but it's also a bombshell to the way we think as human beings. It blows up our *natural thinking*. Think about it for a moment. Naturally, we think, if I'm going to be saved, if I'm going to receive the righteousness of God, certainly I must DO something for it. Certainly, *I must go to church, be baptized, read my Bible, pray a prayer*. Certainly, there must be something, right? Isn't there something that I MUST DO in order to receive it or gain it? Is there some *work*, some *good deeds*, some *denial of myself*? Some sacrifice? Certainly, there is something, right?

Paul is very careful, and he says, "*But now apart from law.*" In other words, apart from all human activity. And with that one statement, he destroys all good works when it comes to gaining the righteousness of God.

- **Romans 4:4-5**—Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. ⁵ But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness.
- **Ephesians 2:8-9**—For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; ⁹ not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Human works are ruled out. Praiseworthy attitudes are ruled out. Noble acts of service are ruled out. Every commendable and sacrificial deed that man has ever done is wiped away. He says, "*but now apart from the Law*"—apart from *religious rituals*, apart from *giving*, apart from *tithing*, apart from *service*, apart from *anything that man can do*. And to see the glory of the Gospel, we need to embrace that.

Mother Teresa spent her life in the slums of Calcutta and gave herself to the needs of the poor and needy. Yet *all her sacrifice* never obtained this righteousness of God that makes sinners acceptable to Him.

Billy Graham preached to millions of people, and yet all his preaching never obtained this righteousness. A missionary can serve his whole life in the Sahara Desert, and it will have nothing to do with obtaining this righteousness. All our works are excluded. It is apart from human activity. It is apart from obedience. It is apart from *what we deserve*. And this is what makes the Gospel different than every other message.

You see, all the other philosophies and religions of the world say that you have to do something to gain acceptance before God. But the Gospel of Jesus Christ declares: you can't do anything, but God has done something. It is the only message that says *what we could never achieve on our own, God has done*.

So, this righteousness is in a category by itself. It's *unique*, and we need to get this clear and firm in our minds. There is nothing, nothing, no nothing, that you or I could ever do to *achieve a right standing with God*.

Application: Now you say, what does this mean for me, Pastor? Well, one thing it means is that *boasting is excluded*. You will never be able to get to heaven and say, you know what, I'm here because I placed my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. You can't boast in your *faith*. Faith is a gift from God (*Eph.2:8-9*). You can't boast in your *church membership*. You can't boast of your *effort*. You can't boast about any *sacrifice* you've made. Boasting is absolutely excluded, which means as we come to understand the righteousness of God, there should be a humility deep down in our soul.

And I know that as some of you are listening to me right now, and you're wrestling in your flesh. You're trying to think of everything I'm saying, and you're trying to test it with the rule of Scripture, but your flesh wants to gain something in this. You want to DO something to get it, but according to the Word of God, it is apart from any human activity.

Here's the second thing Paul wants us to see...

B. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS BEEN MANIFESTED. (v.21b)

²¹ But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested.

The verb **"manifested"** here denotes that it has always *existed*, and it now has *materialized*. Paul is not saying that it just *happened*. He is not saying that it's just been *created*, or that it has just *come about*. No, no, no. There's always been a way to be right with God. It has always been a reality. But now—in the early years of the first century—something has happened in order to make this righteousness with God very, very, very clear. A recent event has introduced a new situation. What has happened? *Christ has come. Christ has died. Christ has been raised from the dead*.

- **Galatians 4:4-5**—But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, ⁵ so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

The word **"manifested"** here is not the same thing as *revealed*. Those are two different Greek words. The word *revealed* means *to unveil something*. The Book of Revelation is the apocalupsis; it's the unveiling of Jesus Christ. When we talk about something being *unveiled* or revealed, we're saying we want to expose to open view what was hidden before. But when we say that something is **manifested**, it means allowing light to fall on something that has been placed in the shade so that those to whom it had been revealed understand it.

What Paul is teaching here is that *this righteousness of God* has had light shed on it so that it becomes clear to those to whom the revelation is given. Christ has always been there, but He was in the shade, as it were—behind *types, shadows, promises, and symbols*—but now, the righteousness of God has been made clear; very, very clear. It has been set forth finally and forevermore through Christ's accomplished work at Calvary.

RECAP: The first thing we've discovered is that *God's righteousness is apart from law*. Second, *God's righteousness has been made clear*. It's not in the corner somewhere hidden where you've got to try to figure it out. No, it's been made clear so that everyone can know.

C. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS BEEN WITNESSED BY THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS. (v.21c)

Isn't this what he tells us at the end of verse 21? *"Being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets."*

Come up close and listen. Let me work from behind the scenes and then we'll come to the text. What Paul is doing right now is he's exercising *great pastoral sensitivity*. He's thinking of his people, the Jews. They are people that he loves. According to Romans Chapter 9, Paul said he was willing to be cursed if they would be saved. Paul imagines them listening to him, and then saying in their mind, "Wait a minute Paul...are you trashing God's gift to us? Are you making nothing of His Law? Are you saying that the Law throughout the centuries was worthless and valueless?"

No, no, Paul says, don't think about that for a moment. The Law was never meant to make us right with God. As a matter of fact, the apostle tells us in Galatians Chapter 3 verse 21 *"For if a law had been given which was able to impart life, then righteousness would indeed have been based on law."* The Law cannot give life, therefore being right with God is not based on the Law.

Paul says, *"the righteousness of God was witnessed by the Law and the Prophets."* He is simply saying it was witnessed in the Old Testament. **"The Law and the Prophets"** is a summary term that encapsulates the entire Old Testament—from Genesis to Malachi. The Law is the first five books, and the Prophets is Joshua through Malachi.

In other words, the entire Old Testament bore witness to the righteousness that God *requires*, and the righteousness that God will provide in the Gospel. Paul wants us to know that this is not a new message. What Paul has to say is as old as the Old Testament. The Gospel is not a new way of salvation for Gentiles. There is not one way for Jews to be saved and another way for Gentiles to be saved. There is only one way of salvation for everyone. Paul already told us this at the beginning of this letter. Do you recall his business card in Chapter 1:1-2?

- **Romans 1:1-2**—Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures.

What did the Law and the Prophets say about this righteousness of God? I'm glad you asked. You're asking very good questions today. We're going to look at three passages fairly quickly.

- **Genesis 15:6**—Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.
- **Psalms 32:1-2**—How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered!
² How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity,
And in whose spirit there is no deceit!
- **Isaiah 53:11**—As a result of the anguish of His soul,
He will see *it and* be satisfied;
By His knowledge the Righteous One,
My Servant, will justify the many,
As He will bear their iniquities.

What Paul is telling us here in Romans 3:21 is that he is not coming up with something new, this is not something novel, this is not some *idea* that he came up with, this is not his innovation. This is something that is backed by biblical history.

1. God's righteousness is apart from law.
2. God's righteousness has been manifested.
3. God's righteousness has been witnessed by the Law and the Prophets.

And that testimony is this: The righteousness that *God possesses*, the righteousness that *God demands*, the righteousness that *we do not have*, is a righteousness that *He provides*. How, you ask? Where, you ask? And here it is, finally, the fourth thing we discover is found in verse 22 of Romans 3 and it tells us...

D. GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST. (v.22)

²² Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Friends, it doesn't get any plainer than that. I have labored to be simple and plain today because you need to hear and understand the plain, simple, saving Gospel.

We are told that the righteousness of God comes from outside ourselves. It comes from outside the church. It comes from outside this world. It is a righteousness which comes down from the throne of God. Martin Luther called it "an alien or foreign righteousness." It is a righteousness God requires, which comes from God Himself.

Jesus said to the crowd who listened to Him preach the Sermon on the Mount in

- **Matthew 5:20**—For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Here's the vital thing for us—what we need to know is this: *how can this righteousness become mine? How can I obtain it?* You say, "I understand, Pastor, that it's *apart from the law*. I understand that it's been *manifested*. I understand that *the Law and the Prophets testify that salvation has something to do with God's righteousness*. I understand that, but how can it be mine? How can I get it?"

The Bible tells us in this passage, very clearly in verse 22—it is... **through faith in Jesus Christ**.

Here Paul signifies the manner through which the righteous of God is personally received for ourselves. Faith is only as good as its object. It is only a faith that is in Jesus Christ that will give to us the righteousness of God. If you put faith in anything else or anyone else, there will be no righteousness from God. God will only deal with us on the basis of faith in His Son.

What is faith? Faith is the commitment of your life to Jesus Christ. It is nothing less. It is more than mere head knowledge. It is more than warm feelings. It is the exercise of your will—to entrust your life to Jesus Christ. To cross the line. To enter through the narrow gate. To entrust all that you are to all that He is. To half-trust will not get you there. There must be a reliance of your entire life on Jesus Christ. You cannot hold back any part and try to contribute through your good works. True faith is when you come all the way to Jesus Christ. You must do business with God.

Some are listening to me who want to straddle the fence. You want to have faith in Christ AND baptism, faith in Christ AND church membership, faith in Christ AND good works in order to commend you to God. But it is not until you burn all these other bridges behind you that true faith is realized. It is not until you turn away from anything else that you would rely upon and turn exclusively to Christ alone that you receive this righteousness. Faith is full confidence in Christ alone.

You cannot say I will believe in Jesus and other religions and other ways and other things to make me acceptable before God. Faith is a decisive step. It leaves the world system and its easy ways. Faith, that is, saving faith, begins with the truth—the truth about God, the truth about yourself, the truth about your position before God being under His wrath, and then the truth that salvation is exclusively found in Jesus Christ. You must understand this in order to be saved.

You also must be convinced in your heart of the need for Christ and the truthfulness of the Gospel message. It was for this reason that the Holy Spirit came into the world—to convict men and women, boys and girls of sin, righteousness, and judgment (*John 16:8*). Then as an act of your will, based on what you know to be true in the Word and God and what you believe in your own soul, you must take the decisive step of faith and come all the way to Christ—calling upon His name ALONE to be your Lord and Savior.

Paul will spend the next few verses explaining that it is faith alone. Look now at...

- **Verse 25**—whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.
- **Verse 26**—so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.
- **Verse 27**—Where then is boasting? It is excluded. But what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith.
- **Verse 28**—For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law.
- **Verse 30**—since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.
- **Verse 31**—Do we then nullify the Law through faith? May it never be!
- **Romans 10:9-10**—that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; ¹⁰ for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.

Faith and belief are synonymous terms (*Cf. Rom.5:1; Eph.2:8-9*). And the kind of faith that brings the righteousness of God is an empty-handed faith—

*Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to the cross I cling,
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless look, to Thee for grace.
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Savior, or I die.³*

³ Augustus Toplady, *Rock of Ages*, 1776.

Faith is a gift. Not every man has faith, but every man can have it. This faith is not some generic kind of faith. He's going to expand on this further, but we're told here that it's faith, not the Holy Spirit, faith not in God the Father, but it must be *faith in Jesus Christ*. Yes, if you have true faith you will believe in the first and third Persons of the Trinity—for God is one. But salvation is found in *by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone* (Acts 4:12; John 14:6).

- Faith is believing that this perfect Man died for you and in your place.
- Faith is saying that Jesus is the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal.2:20)
- Faith is believing that Jesus takes your unrighteousness upon Himself, and in exchange, He gives you, as a gift, His very own righteousness.

But we're told in verse 22 that even greater—it is *through faith in Jesus Christ*. He's very specific.

It's faith in the person who became a man; it's faith in the real humanity of Jesus Christ. You must trust in the fact that Jesus was not some phantom ghost who came and appeared and then floated off into eternity, but that He actually came. He was flesh and blood, just like we are. He was a real man, but He is, nevertheless, God in the flesh. You must believe in Jesus the Anointed One, the Christ, the Messiah, the One who was promised. He is more than a man. He demonstrated His deity through *His signs*, through *His sayings*, and through *the Scriptures*.

You must trust that Jesus is the God-man; 100 percent God, as if He were never man; 100 percent man, as if He were never God—united in one Person forever! And you must trust in THE JESUS OF SCRIPTURE in order to be saved. Not *the Jesus of your own imagination*, not *the Jesus of the faith teachers*, but the Jesus of the Word of God—the only Jesus there really is! The only Jesus that *saves*. Jesus Christ our Lord. You must have trust in the biblical Jesus, the Jesus of Scripture.

Please give me your attention for just a few moments longer. Let me try to make this plain to you. It was Martin Luther who called this “the great exchange;” and this is the heart of what the righteousness of God means, and it's absolutely staggering.

What this Gospel tells us—and I wish God would give me the ability to preach it to you—is that God provides for us something we could not gain on our own. What He *requires* and what He *demands*, He *provides*. The Bible puts it this way in,

- **2 Corinthians 5:21**—He [God the Father] made Him [Jesus Christ] who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Isn't that absolutely wonderful, good news? And I want you to think about this, God doesn't give us a *discounted righteousness*, God doesn't give us a *defective righteousness*, but He gives us *divine righteousness*—*His own righteousness*. I cannot get my mind all around that, but it's true.

Imagine the greatest human being that you know—perhaps it is your grandmother or some political or military figure. If you could clone them and make a million replicates and then combine all that is admirable about them, and place it in your life, still, their righteousness wouldn't even begin to compare to the divine righteousness that is God, and God alone.

Martin Luther wrestled with this for a very long time. He read Psalm 31 verse 1 which says, “*In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge; let me never be ashamed; in Your righteousness deliver me.*”

When Luther was lecturing in the Psalms at the university, he couldn't understand that verse. He said it didn't make sense to him. When he thought about *God's righteousness*, he thought about it as a terrifying thing.

He could understand if the psalmist had said, *punish me*, or *punish me, destroy me, or condemn me in Your righteousness*—but how could the psalmist say, *"Deliver me in Your righteousness"*?

Then, in November 1515, Martin Luther began to lecture in the Book of Romans, and listen to what he said:

"I long to understand Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and nothing stood in my way but that one expression—the righteousness of God—because I took it to mean that righteousness whereby God is righteous and deals righteously in punishing the unrighteous. Night and day, I pondered until I grasped the truth that the righteousness of God is that righteousness whereby, through grace and sheer mercy, He justifies us by faith."

In other words, Luther is saying, *it's not the righteousness He is demanding of us; it is the righteousness that He gives us*. He went on to say,

"...thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and have gone through open doors into paradise. The whole of Scripture took a new meaning—whereas before the righteousness of God filled me with hate, now it became expressively sweet."

This Gospel is the open door to paradise! And everyone needs it. This is the last thing Paul wants you to see. Paul concludes in verses 22-23.

²² even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

It seems rather redundant, but it's really for us. This righteousness of God is provided through faith in Jesus for all who believe, no matter who you are, no matter what you've done, no matter where you may be now, no matter what little you have to offer, no matter how unworthy you feel, no matter how weak you may feel—this righteousness is for you. It's for you—*"there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

Are you perfect? No. Have you achieved the moral holiness of the Law of God? No. Compared to your neighbor or your cousin, you might be better than them in some ways. But when your life and mine are placed on the scales of God's righteousness, we are found wanting!

On one side of the scale is our entire lives. On the other side of the scale is the glory of God—the sum total of His personal perfections. When we are measured against the absolute, infinite, unvarnished holiness of God—the glory of God—we have sinned and fallen short. Every single person in the world desperately needs the righteousness of God—which only God can give—to receive a right standing before Him.

That means you, sir, and you, ma'am. That means you, young person. Wherever you are in the world, whether you have heard the Gospel or not, whether you are religious or unchurched, male or female, you, whoever you are—wherever you are—you need Jesus.

God's arms are open wide; righteousness is provided for all who will believe in Jesus Christ. That's the good news.

Being a Christian is not scraping your way into heaven and then God begrudgingly accepting you by sending an angel to find some dusty robe and to put on you and then saying, "Oh yeah, you can be in heaven, but you need to stand in the back over there somewhere and stay out of trouble and don't make too much noise." That's not what salvation is like.

Salvation is pictured for us in the parable of the prodigal son. What God does is He says, "Bring out the best robes for them," not some *defective* robe, but the *best* robe, *the robe of My righteousness*, "and place it on the one who believes."

God gives us this salvation *freely* and *fully*, and He gives it to us as we trust in Jesus. Can you see why those who come to Jesus are safe and secure?

Sometimes our conscience troubles us; sometimes we feel very insecure. Satan whispers in our ears. Sometimes our own understanding of the holiness of God intimidates us. But, when we think *of the righteousness of God, it is that righteousness that is apart from law, that righteousness that has been manifested and made clear, that righteousness which is through faith in Jesus Christ, witnessed by the Law and the Prophets*, that righteousness given to us, and it has nothing to do with us. Oh, dear friends, now we can be safe and secure. Safe and secure.

I think the hymn writer got it right. Nicholas Von Zinzendorf, the leader of the Moravians put it this way, he said,

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness,
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
'Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

As I've been meditating on this good news, I found myself struggling still. I said, "Lord why am I struggling so much still? With this message I ought to be leaping all over the office, I ought to be running up and down the streets! Why, why am I not rejoicing as I ought?" You may be feeling the same as you listen now. Wondering, why am I not more excited about this?

The answer is that the flesh gets no glory in the salvation of God. Our flesh steadily wants to get in on some of it, but it cannot. And so, it depresses us. But in your mind and in your spirit, if you are saved, you are agreeing with God's Word deep in your soul. And you're saying, "Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Jesus!" My identity is all wrapped up in You now. Not *what I do* or *don't do*. It's all in You now. I'm grateful for this salvation that is mine.

CONCLUSION:

Oh, one last stanza from that great hymn. Nicholas Von Zinzendorf said,

*O let the dead now hear Thy voice,
Now bid Thy banished ones rejoice,
Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness.⁴*

⁴ Nicholas Von Zinzendorf, *Jesus Thy Blood and Righteousness*, 1739.

Oh, dear friends, the beauty of the Christians' life is not his deeds. It's the robe of righteousness that he wears because of Christ. Amen. The question is, have you come all the way to Jesus? Come now. Come today. Come and live.

© August 20, 2023 The Church at South Mountain

You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that you do not alter the wording in any way and do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction.

For web posting, a link to this document on our website is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by The Church at South Mountain.

Please include the following statement on any distributed copy:
© The Church at South Mountain. Website: casm.org

While all reasonable attempts have been taken to trace the literary and biblical sources used by the author, due to the nature of some of the original materials (old audio/radio or live preaching events), some have been impossible to locate. Any information regarding the origin of any unreferenced statements or quotations is welcomed and will be included in the next revision of the study.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are from the New American Standard Bible: 1960, 1962, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1975, 1977, 1995 by the Lockman Foundation.