**Redeemed from the Law by Faith in Christ**

Based on [Romans 3](http://biblia.com/books/esv/Ro3)

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Advent Midweek 2

Pastor Nathan Fuehrer

A central theme in the Book of Romans is the righteousness of God. Righteousness means “right-ness.” **God is *right* in everything He is, in everything He says, and in everything He does.** Some people accuse God of being evil, or careless, or wrong. This does not make it so. God is always right, whether He demonstrates it or not. God is right when he allow children to starve, family to die of disease. When he allows the wicked to prosper and the faithful to suffer, despite what our worldly wisdom tells us, God is still right in everything he does, and everything he permits. God is righteous whether he shows it or not, whether we can see it or not.

But in Romans Chapter 3, Paul teaches how God has *shown* Himself to be right in all He is and all He does. **First, God is shown to be right when He judges sin and unrighteousness.** And second, God is shown to be right when He declares also to be *right* those who have faith in Jesus Christ.

First, God is shown to be right when He judges sin and unrighteousness. Romans says, “**The Jews were entrusted with the oracles [messages] of God. What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, ‘That you [O God] may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged**.’”

The unrighteousness of Jews and of all men in no way speaks against the righteousness of God. On the contrary, in the very act of judging sinful men to be guilty, God has shown himself to be righteous.

If you went to court because a man stole your car, and witnesses abound all testifying that he is guilty, and let’s even say the crook himself doesn’t even deny the charge. He is by all accounts guilty as charged; and the trial should simply be a formality…but inconceivably the Judge rules him “not guilty” and lets him go.

This judge may be a lot of things. Someone might call him merciful, overlooking the man’s guilt, and giving him a second chance. **Maybe the criminal, he’s really sorry and apologized and all and the Judge doesn’t think he’s a threat to do it again.** By that virtue, the judge may be a lot of things—he may be merciful, forgiving, patient, kind. **He may be a lot of things, but despite all these thing, one thing he is not is “right.”** He is not a righteous judge. He is wrong; because he pronounced a verdict that was clearly false, showing himself to be a liar.

But when God judges sin, He doesn’t pronounce false verdicts. He doesn’t lie in order to be merciful and forgiving. He calls a thing what it is. **He calls guilty men guilty, and innocent men innocent.** By judging sinful men unrighteous, He *shows* His own righteousness. And it doesn’t matter if the whole world is wrong, so long as the judge is right. “**Let God be true though everyone were a liar.**”

And God, the righteous judge, rightly judges ***all*** men to be unrighteous. All have sinned, Jews and Gentiles, every person of every tribe of every nation begotten of man since Adam are born unrighteous. **None is righteous, no, not one. All have turned aside. No one does good not even one. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness, their feet are swift to shed blood, in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.** This is the judgment of every man under the law. By nature, there is nothing good *in man* that is *of man*. Every man by nature is murderous, bitter, violent, slanderous, without fear of God and a fool.

And the righteousness of God is shown in that His judgment shuts every mouth. Everyone knows that their flesh wars against the word of God, and despises His rule. **Sure people may put up a false front, paint themselves righteous on the outside while their throat remains an open grave of the deadness inside.** But standing before the righteous judge, under the law, there is nothing anyone can say. All are without excuse.

The judge has seen the evidence and asks *what you have to say for yourself?* “***At least I’m not as bad as that guy***.” Objection, immaterial testimony. The question is what do you have to say *for yourself*. “**I did the best I could**.” Objection, irrelevant testimony. It doesn’t matter if you tried really hard not to sin. The question is you have been charged with sin…what do you have to say for yourself? “**I want a different judge!**” Denied, I am your righteous judge and you have been charged with sin, what do you have to say for yourself…Nothing. Every jaw dropped…every mouth stopped…all boasting excluded. There is nothing to say to God while under the law.

“**Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God**.” This is a terrifying image. You have sinned, God is a righteous judge, and so He’s not going to perjure Himself to get you off the hook, to lie about your unrighteousness. **You have been charged with sin. And when He asks what you have to say for yourself, all you can do is stand there, open your mouth and shut it again.** Your mouth is stopped. Under the Law, you have nothing to say for yourself. You know your sin and you’re caught dead to rights. How horribly right it would be for the righteous Judge to throw you in hells prison forever…*except* that there is more to be said--not for yourself--but for the son of God. There is the Gospel.

Second, God is shown to be right when he declares to be right those who have faith in Jesus Christ. **“But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the Law—although the Law and the prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.”**

God is shown to be right by giving his son as a gift to redeem the whole world. “**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation [a sacrifice] by his blood to be received by faith.**” God is right because He does not simply lie and say falsely that we are right with His Law. Instead he sent his Son who lived the perfect life of the Law, **and then poured out his holy precious blood through his innocent suffering and death on the cross**. And that propitiation, that sacrifice, satisfied the Law’s demand for justice.

If God were to forgive our debt without that sacrifice, he would be as unrightous as the judge who rules a car thief “not guilty.” **There are Christians, even a movement within the Lutheran Church lately called “Radical Lutheranism” that does just that.** They teach that Jesus death didn’t pay any debt for us. It was simply a murder further showing our rebellion against God who forgives sins freely, arbitrarily. He is God and he doesn’t need permission from the Law to forgive anyone.

Do not be deceived. If God forgives apart from the propitiatory/payment blood of His Son, He would be unrighteous because He would be denying his own Law and His own nature. He would be a hypocrite and a liar. We couldn’t even trust His word of forgiveness, because he could just as well have lied about that too. And He would be unrighteous, because He would be declaring guilty sinners, not guilty when His own Law clearly says otherwise. Let it not be so!

But the righteousness of God is shown in this, according to the Law you are guilty and the Law demands its pound of flesh, and its payment in blood. And though your mouth is stopped, Jesus Christ opens his mouth and says to the Law, “**Here is my body and I give it to you for the fallen world, take as many pounds as you rightly require. Here is my blood poured out for the life of the world, gather as much of it as justice demands**.” O Righteous Law of the Father, you’ll find more than enough to balance the books, for this is the Son of God, Giver of Life, Jesus Christ, the eternal and last Word of God, who holds creation together, and redeems it from the curse of the Law, by the gracious gift of Himself.

Romans continues, “**This [sacrifice of Jesus] was to show God’s righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus**.” The Law is satisfied, the price for your sin was paid. You did the crime, Christ did the time and that is just.

It is just that Christ should suffer what you deserve, when you receive his sacrifice by faith, because God is Love and Love is sacrifice. Those who reject Christ’s sacrifice cannot stand in the judgment, because faith is what imputes the righteousness of Jesus to you. As it was said of Abraham, “**He had faith, and that faith was credited to him as righteousness**.” So too, Jesus redeemed the whole world from sin by his own righteousness, but that righteousness is meant to be credited to you by faith. Otherwise, God would be a liar to declare you righteous. But by looking at Christ who is yours by faith, our Righteous God can, without perjuring himself, declare you right, right with the Law and therefore right with Himself. Let it be so.

In Romans Chapter 3, Paul teaches how God has shown Himself to be right in all He is and all He does. **First, God is shown to be right when He judges sin and unrighteousness.** Second, God is shown to be right when He declares to be right you who have faith in Jesus Christ, the one who shed his own holy blood as a righteous payment to satisfy the righteous demands of the law, and so redeem the world.