

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS GOD'S GIFT

Romans 3:22 "This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe."

I remember many years ago seeing a billboard along the highway that said, "Get right with God!" It caught my attention and made me ask myself whether I was or was not right with God. Those four words punctuated with an exclamation mark were pure law. They told me there was something I needed to do, had to do, and should do. This in turn caused me to ask myself, "What do I need to do, had to do and should do to get right with God?"

Today's devotional verse is about "righteousness." Righteousness is a very important word. It is found, depending on the English translation, up to 540 times in 520 Bible passages. It is found in the Bible more times (540 vs. 348) than the word faith and faith related words. A simple definition of the word righteousness is, "A right standing with God. Righteousness is the condition of being in right relationship with the Lord."

Contrary to the implication of the highway billboards message that told me I had to do something to achieve a right standing with God, Romans 3:22 says, "righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ. . ." As faith in Jesus is God's gift that saves you (Ephesians 2:8-9) so righteousness, your right relationship with God through Christ, is also God's gift to you.

Faith and righteousness go hand in hand. Go back to Romans 1:17. There Paul states, ". . . the righteous will live by his faith." At least 28 separate Bible passages make this statement. The Pharisees and Jesus were constantly in debate about how a person becomes righteous. They taught one's actions were the key to righteousness. Doing good things, right things, keeping laws, rules and regulations were necessary to earn a right relationship with God. Jesus rebuked their teaching with these words, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness." (Matthew 23:27-28)

Romans 3:22 is clear that your righteousness is God's gift to you through faith in Jesus.

Prayer: Gracious Lord Jesus, You alone have done all necessary for me to have a right relationship with my Heavenly Father. Send Your Spirit to work through the Word and the Sacraments to keep me one with You and with Your Father who sent You. Amen

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.

Bold shall I stand in that great day, Cleansed and redeemed, no debt to pay;
Fully absolved through these I am From sin and fear, from guilt and shame.

Lord, I believe Thy precious blood, Which at the mercy seat of God
Pleads for the captives' liberty, Was also shed in love for me.

Lord, I believe, were sinners more Than sands upon the ocean shore,
Thou hast for all a ransom paid, For all a full atonement made.

When from the dust of death I rise To claim my mansion in the skies,
This then shall be my only plea: Jesus hath lived and died for me.

Jesus, be endless praise to Thee, Whose boundless mercy hath for me,
For me, and all Thy hands have made, An everlasting ransom paid.
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