

## Romans #14

The statement has been made that in the gospel of Christ is revealed the righteousness of God, which righteousness is apart from the law yet witnessed both by the law and the prophets (Rom. 1:16f; 3:21f). In Romans 3:24-26 Paul tells us at length what and through whom that righteousness comes. *"...being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to show his righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God; for the showing I say of his righteousness at this present season: that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus"* (Rom. 3:24-26).

Many are the words in this text which are connected with man's forgiveness: justify; grace, redemption, propitiation, passover, forbearance, present season, just and justifier. Someone has said that a proposition well defined is half-argued and we believe that in this text definitions of words and terms will do much to help understand the apostle's words. First, there is the word *"justified"* with the other kindred words, *"just"* and *"justifier."* These three words describe God, for it is He that justifies the sinner (Rom. 8:33); and the action of that justification, for all have been proven to be sinners and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). Grace, redemption, and propitiation all are directly related to God's justification of the sinner. Sinners are justified by God's grace, His unmerited favor which Paul argues in other letters as well (Eph. 2:8-11; Tit. 1:22). This grace is possible because in Christ, God has redeemed us (bought us back) through his blood (Acts 2:28; Eph. 5:25; 1 Cor. 6:20; 1 Pet. 1:18; Rom. 5:9). Christ's blood is the propitiation (appeasement); sufficient to satisfy the atonement for sin.

Next the writer mentions the *"passing over of sins"* in the forbearance of God. The idea of passing over of sin does not mean that God ignored them; it means He did not immediately render to the sinner the wages for his sins. God did not immediately visit sin's punishment upon sinners because of His longsuffering. He wishes none to perish; He wants all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). He cannot be JUST unless an appropriate offering is made for sin; yet how can such be wrought when men died before such an offering was made? Animal blood is not an appropriate sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:4). Well then, what about Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Daniel and others? Are they lost or saved? Obviously they are saved. How can God be *"just"* in justifying such men before an appropriate sacrifice was offered for their sins, for they all sinned? He was *"just"* on the basis of what he would do; He would offer His Son as a ransom for man. God *"passed over"* the sins of the ancient worthies. He did not ignore nor forget their sins, but because He knew He would offer a sacrifice which would be sufficient for redemption for them, He *"passed over"* (deferred) punishing sin unto the appropriate gift was offered. When Christ was sacrificed, God was vindicated. The appropriate gift was made for Abraham's sins and God was able, in the death of Christ, both to be just -- just in punishing sin, as His righteous nature required that He be, and at the same time He was able to justify the sinner, which He longed to do.

What a great tragedy it is that fallen men are far less interested in their salvation than our Savior is!

-- Jim McDonald