



SIMPLY GOOD NEWS

What's your greatest need? Did you know that the greatest need of men and women always has been, and always will be, to be made acceptable to God? God is the common factor in every person's life, whatever their country or circumstances.

The problem for us is that God is holy and righteous. There's no sin, no fault, no weakness in God. God will not tolerate sin, and you and I are sinners.

Men and women, as we are, are unacceptable to God. We don't satisfy God's demands, and we can't meet God's standards. I'm sure there are many people who think they are good and can meet God's demands. But the fact is that all

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man's righteousness, all the best things we've ever done, are just like a pile of filthy rags in the sight of God (Isaiah 64:6).

Filthy rag

Think of it like this. Imagine a man cleaning his car—but not the outside, the inside. He's cleaning the engine. He has this dirty, filthy rag, and he is mopping the oil off the sump and the camshaft, and this rag is getting filthier and filthier. And then his wife calls him because their little daughter has been sick. So he comes indoors with this filthy, grimy rag, and he has to mop the vomit up with this rag. Can you imagine the state of this rag?

Then he comes into the living room, and he puts the rag on the coffee table! You know what his wife will say, don't you? 'Get that filthy rag out of my house! I don't want that filthy rag in my house!' That's what God says when you bring your righteousness to him: 'Get that filthy rag out of my house!' If you can feel revolted at the thought of this rag with its oil and vomit, just think that that is how God sees your righteousness. This is how God sees all those things that you think you've done well, those things you think God will be pleased with.

And the terrible fact is stated in Romans 3:10, where the apostle Paul says 'there is no one righteous, not even one'—not in all this world.

Because of this, our greatest need is to be made able to meet God's standard and become acceptable to him.

God shouts

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written : *'The just shall live by faith'* (Romans 1:17).

According to this verse from the Bible, God's good news gives us the very righteousness we so desperately need. This righteousness is 'revealed'. This means that the gospel is not man's idea of what religion ought to be, the result of centuries of searching for God. Instead, the gospel is an announcement from heaven. 'Here's the answer,' says God, 'to your lack of righteousness, to your sin and depravity and waywardness.' God is shouting from heaven, 'Here's the answer!'

Now the righteousness here is not describing something about God, like his holiness or purity. It really means a righteousness which comes from God, that God gives us. It's not saying, 'Here is God's righteousness, look at it and admire it.' It's saying, 'Here is the righteousness that God gives us.'

Free gift

This is why the gospel is good news. The gospel does not tell us what we must achieve, it tells us what has been achieved for us, and what we must receive now as a gift from God.

Remember that the gospel is designed by God, worked out by him. Its purpose is to satisfy his demands, and its achievement is our salvation. But here is the key point: our salvation could not

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be achieved if God's demands were not satisfied.

God's demands

So what are God's demands? God demands from you a righteousness as good as his own. God has not got one standard for himself and then a second standard for us. There's only one standard with God: he demands from you and me a righteousness like his.

Would you say that that's unreasonable? Actually, it's not unreasonable, because God made man sinless, in his own image. God wants us to be just as we were when he made us. That's not unreasonable. But it is impossible. Can you follow the logic of that? It's impossible, because our sin makes it impossible.

So where does that leave us? It leaves us with no ability or capacity to save ourselves. It leaves us needing someone to save us. Whoever this saviour is, to save us he will have to provide for us a righteousness as good as God's.

But there's no righteousness as good as God's righteousness. So the only possible way we can be saved, the only possible way we can be made acceptable to God, is if we have God's righteousness.

But surely that's impossible? No, the gospel makes it possible, and that is its glory. The gospel makes it possible for you, no matter who you are or what you are like, no matter what your past life has been like, to have a righteousness—not just a righteousness as good as God's, but actually to have God's

righteousness. That's what the gospel offers us, nothing less. God provides the very righteousness that he demands from you. You say, 'I can't do it', but God says, 'Don't worry, I've done it for you.'

Jesus and Calvary

So how do we get this righteousness? Well, we get it from Jesus.

Everywhere in the gospel, you eventually come back to Jesus, and the sooner you get to him the better. Jesus Christ is God. We must never apologize for that, never backtrack on the exclusiveness and the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's not just a prophet like Mohammed, but Jesus is God become man, the Son of God, co-equal with the Father in glory and majesty, holiness and righteousness. And he came into this world to satisfy the demands of God on your behalf. He came to satisfy those reasonable, but impossible, demands for you.

Praise God, Jesus was sinless.

He was the spotless, sinless, holy Lamb of God. And because he had no sin, God was able to lay on Jesus the sin of us all. He took our guilt, and he took our punishment on the cross of Calvary.

There are only two places in the whole universe where God deals with sin. One is Calvary—and the other is hell. Will you have your sin dealt with at the cross of Calvary, where there is forgiveness, or in hell, where your sin will forever receive the judgement, wrath and anger of a holy God?

God justly demanded that your sins should be punished. But Jesus bore our guilt and our punishment, and he paid it all. There's nothing left to be paid, nothing further the law can demand.

Jesus satisfied it all on the cross of Calvary, and because of this, God can cancel our debts. He has to cancel them, because they have been paid. God then 'imputes', or 'credits', to us the very righteousness of Christ.

This gift of God we receive by faith, when we confess our sin to God and ask for forgiveness.

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