

## Intro:

As we begin our message today, I would like to call your attention to a word in Rm 3.19: “that ... all the world may become guilty before God.”

“May become guilty” – other translations:

- “May become accountable” NAU
- “May be held accountable” ESV, NIV, NET
- “Be subject to the judgement of God” GENEVA
- “May be brought under the judgement” RV

This word is a legal word; it pictures a courtroom where the case has been made, the defence is finished, the defendant is found guilty, and all that remains is for the verdict to be announced.

The only difference between this courtroom and every other courtroom is that the defense is found with nothing to say.

The charge is *unrighteousness*. No one has an answer. Paul has already demolished every line of defense.

We could portray the defenses men might make against God on this charge in these ways:

- The Pagan: “I don’t need no stinkin’ righteousness...” or “Might makes right...”  
*The gospel answers*, “But you do! Without righteousness you are under the wrath of God!”
- The Moral Man: “I have my own righteousness, I’m not a sinner like those pagan dogs...”  
*The gospel answers*: “Your righteousness is insufficient, you still have the same sins and still stand under the wrath of God.”
- The Religious Man: “I have my religious deeds, I’m not included in the mass of sinner’s subject to judgement.”  
*The gospel answers*: “But your religious deeds can’t give you righteousness, for the very code that gives you the deeds also points its finger at your sins. You are still subject to judgement.”

An awful hush hangs over the courtroom.

Clearly the defendant is guilty. Nothing more can be said. Or... is there an argument yet? Yes! The prosecuting attorney rises to his feet. He lifts up his hand to gain the floor. There is a blood-red scar in the wrist, and he says:

“But now! ...

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested!”

Read Rm 3.21

**Proposition:** God’s plan for saving men from sin becomes clear at last – man is guilty, yes, but man has a defense, found not in himself, but in Another.

## I. A new era dawns – the era of New Covenant righteousness

A. “But now” could be simply a change of subject

1. Move from one paragraph to the next
2. But the dramatic words used before and after indicate it is much more than just a new paragraph marker...

“All time is divided for Paul into ‘now’ and ‘then’.”<sup>1</sup>

B. The time-orientation is confirmed by parallel passages

1. Rm 16.25-26
2. Eph 2.12-13
3. Col 1.26-27
4. 2 Tim 1.9-10
5. Heb 9.25-26

In time past: a mystery; in time present: a manifestation

C. This new thing is the full manifestation of New Covenant righteousness

1. Prophesied by Jeremiah (Jer 31.31-34)
  - a. Jeremiah only sees partially
  - b. Jeremiah sees the new covenant in Jewish hearts
  - c. But now... is manifested... something even bigger than what Jeremiah saw
2. Without-law righteousness
  - a. We will speak more of this next week in a sermon on *The Righteousness from God*

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<sup>1</sup> James Denney, “St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans” in *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, W. Robertson Nicoll, ed., p. 609.

- b. The answer to the courtroom charge...
- c. The defense that may be made...
- d. The defense that is made for us...
- e. Is this new kind of righteousness we cannot produce ourselves  
– a ‘without-law’ kind of righteousness

Any man who has this righteousness can plead it at the bar of God’s judgement and be justified.

But more on this righteousness next week...

The righteousness men must plead has been hidden in shadows, hinted at, but yet incompletely seen.

In the gospel Paul preaches, however...

## II. A more perfect manifestation emerges

- A. Please note that Paul is not saying that something new has been given
  - 1. The New Testament is not replacing one kind of salvation with another
  - 2. The gospel is not replacing one religion with another
- B. On the contrary, the New Testament and the gospel are making plain the only way of salvation for men
  - 1. Not *given* but *manifested*...
  - 2. There has been and is one and only one kind of righteousness that saves
  - 3. What has changed is that the one kind of righteousness and the way to possess it is made crystal clear and is fully explained
  - 4. One more point: the manifestation occurred in the past, but the manifestation continues on into the present [perfect tense verb]

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<sup>NAU</sup> **2Ti 1:9** [God,]who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity, <sup>10</sup> but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel

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- a. The past point of manifestation: Christ on the cross, buried, raised

- b. The continuing into the present manifestation: the gospel of Christ dead, buried, and risen again (preaching)

Three of my favorite commentators on Romans:

Hoyt: “Even though this righteousness existed before and had been appropriated by Old Testament saints, it was not manifested in fullness until Christ went to the cross. There it was brought out into the open and made clear and plain. All the types and shadows dealing with sin pointed forward to this event, but not until Christ actually died did this righteousness by faith take on life-size dimensions.”<sup>2</sup>

Newell: “God had always dealt righteously, although His way was not as yet plain. He pardoned many, and He did not seem wholly to judge sin even in the unsaved world. But at the cross ‘He spared not His own Son.’ Here was revealed, indeed, righteousness to the uttermost!”<sup>3</sup>

Hodge: “The revelation has been made and still continues. This righteousness, which, so to speak, had long been buried under the types and indistinct utterances of the old dispensation, has now in the Gospel been made clear and apparent.”<sup>4</sup>

❖ This last, ‘the types and indistinct utterances of the old dispensation’ I now want to turn our attention to...

### III. A long-standing witness is made plain

#### A. Continuous witness

1. All the Old Testament is included — ‘Law and prophets’ a technical term for entire OT
2. All the OT writers witnessed to this truth as they recorded the Word of the LORD
3. The words of the OT writers continue to witness to this day concerning ‘without-law righteousness’ (see Rm 4.1-5, etc.)

<sup>2</sup> Herman A. Hoyt, *The First Christian Theology*, p. 59.

<sup>3</sup> William R. Newell, *Romans Verse by Verse*, p. 95/

<sup>4</sup> Charles Hodge, *Romans*, p. 83.

B. An incomplete witness in that it is not plainly or fully manifested

Let me quote Harry Ironside to give a survey and make this point:

“This has been in His mind from the beginning. It is ‘witnessed,’ or borne testimony to, ‘by the law and the prophets.’ Moses depicted in many types of remarkable beauty. The coats of skin wherein our first parents were clothed; the sacrificial victims accepted in behalf of the offerers; the wonderful symbolism of the Tabernacle; all tell out the story of a righteousness provided by God for the unrighteous sinner who turns to Him in faith. The prophets, too, take up the same story. They predict the coming of the Just One who was to die to bring unjust man nigh to God. ‘Deliver me in Thy righteousness,’ cries David. ‘Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow,’ he prays. ‘He hath clothed us in the garments of salvation, in the robe of righteousness,’ says Isaiah, for ‘the chastisement of our peace was upon Him’ who was ‘bruised for our iniquities.’ ‘This is His name,’ exclaims Jeremiah, ‘whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness.’ ‘I will save you from all your uncleanness,’ is the promise through Ezekiel. To Daniel the angel Gabriel foretells the making of ‘reconciliation for iniquity’ and the bringing in of ‘everlasting righteousness.’ The so-called Minor Prophets take up the same strain, and all point forward to the Coming One through whom salvation will be secured for all who repent; Jehovah’s Fellow, who will become the smitten Shepherd for man’s redemption. ‘To Him give all the prophets witness that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins’ (Acts 10.43).”<sup>5</sup>

❖ The last voice in the Ironside quote is the voice of Peter, speaking to Cornelius, revealing the mystery to the first Gentile convert

<sup>5</sup> H. A. Ironside, *Lectures on Romans*, pp. 48-49.

- C. But now... a new time has dawned ... the old witness is now plain
1. Your own righteousness, whether the righteousness of morality or the righteousness of religion, cannot cover your sins – you are under judgement
  2. But now a ‘without-works righteousness’ *has been manifested* – you have something to plead before the judgement bar of God

## Conclusion:

Let’s recall our first parents in the garden as they attempted to cover themselves after they sinned (Gen 3.7ff.)

- First, they attempt to cover their guilt with fig leaves. Fig leaves! (7)
- Second, they try to cover their guilt by hiding in the forest. Hiding from God! (8)
- Last, they tried to shift their guilt by feeble words. Blameshifting! (12, 13)

Your attempts to cover your sin by words or works or even pious prayers will not do!

You have no defense to make in your behalf.

But now!

Someone stands up for you. He stands up to make the only argument that can be made.

But now, without-law righteousness has been manifested... even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ!