



If you read these verses below you'll probably just read through them, much like I have many a time, maybe even mentally agreeing with them. But today, may I ask you to join in letting the meaning of the words soak in? I contemplated only sharing part of the verses but as I read them, and the words began jumping off the page, there was no way to cut out any more than I have.

These words should never be lost, nor the cost to go unnoticed. There is no greater gift of love than this:

***"But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. " Romans 3:21-26***

Such incredible words, what a gift, what grace, what mercy, what love. Let's just unpack a few of the truths from this passage.

The book of Romans was written to believers in Rome. Gentiles who were ***"called of Jesus Christ"*** (1:7) but were being convinced by the Jews around them that if they were truly going to be saved then they must be circumcised and live according to the Law, believing the Law to be righteous, but negating the small fact that they themselves could never keep the whole Law. James points out in his chapter 2 verse 10 that if we are guilty of one sin we are guilty of all, and such were these who were trying to place the Law as the standard before these Roman believers.

Paul determines to speak truth that salvation comes not based on our own righteousness, which Isaiah 64:6 declares as unclean, filthy rags (an extremely graphic description of what our righteousness is, compared to a holy God) but rather, salvation comes only by the righteousness of God which is given through faith in Jesus Christ. Given. It's a gift. There is nothing we can do to earn this kind of righteousness, and in our human state, there is no way to attain it by our behavior. The righteousness of God is the standard, and we all fall miserably short of that. After all, one step away from perfection is no longer perfect, is it?

BUT NOW... Oh God is so good to us! NOW He has shown us His righteousness, and not only shown us, but made it available to us through faith in Jesus Christ.

There is a great cost for our falling short. There is a scale that has tipped and must be justified. The weight of our sin (even one sin) weighs down heavily against our own righteousness. It doesn't matter how many good things we do, one sin outweighs any good because that sin tips the scale to irreversible angles. Irreversible for us that is. But, for those who have faith in the perfect righteousness of Christ, there is a way. God is just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus Christ. Christ's act of living in perfect submission to the Father, never sinning, is able to pay the price for our sin, righting the scale, to make a just adjustment. The price He paid with His very life, through living sinless, dying in our place, that precious price redeemed us. He paid the cost to rescue us from the slave market we were bound to in our own sin. We were once slaves to sin, owing the penalty of death, and Christ came along and said, I will pay that price for this whom I love.

He justified, He redeemed. and became a propitiation. Propitiation. The word is a little obscure, but it refers to the Mercy Seat that was in the holy of holies, where the blood of a sacrifice was placed by the High Priest for God to come and accept the offering. Christ's blood on the mercy seat allowed access for you and I to have a relationship with a Holy God. He became our High Priest making atonement for our sin with His blood, an offering that was wholly acceptable because it met the righteous cost that was due.

*"Whatever is affected by sin or uncleanness needs expiation, for it cannot stand before the holy God and His threatened judgment. Expiation is made supremely by the blood of offerings. God has ordained that this should be so, and blood is appropriate in view of the life that it contains. Life is threatened if expiation is not made, and preserved if it is." - (Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. -1985- Theological Dictionary of the New Testament )*

Christ became the expiation, the propitiation, through His own blood being splattered across the mercy seat of God, for us. Yes, our sin cost. Yes, it required great sacrifice. Yes, it was accomplished through mercy and love. God is just and the justifier of those who have faith in Jesus Christ, those who accept the gift of His grace. Our glorious Redeemer, who exchanged His righteousness for our unrighteousness, the unfathomable gift!

*Father, Thank You for sending Your Son, our Redeemer and the only One who could right our wrongs, justify the scales, and give us new life. May we walk worthy of such a cost, may we live for You, walking in Your righteousness so freely given, but at such a high cost. To You be all glory. Thank You for Your great grace and mercy. Thank You for Your everlasting love.*

For added study, read what these scriptures say about our propitiation:

Hebrews 2:14-18

I John 2:1-2

What does 1 John 2:3-6 tell us about our response?