

THE ENIGMA WHICH IS GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

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Why would anyone describe the righteousness of God as an enigma? After all, Webster says an enigma is, "a riddle, a perplexing or baffling matter." What's so perplexing or baffling about God's righteousness? Where's the riddle in it?

Actually, all we must do to demonstrate the fact that God's righteousness is a baffling riddle to most Christians, and indeed to most human beings, is to listen to how the majority typically describes and defines this. For example, Bible students and scholars typically create extensive, exhaustive lists describing the wonderful attributes of our God (mostly from the Bible), and then they tend to think of these attributes as the righteousness of God. Yet, even if such lists prove to be 100% accurate, I submit that God's righteousness is *not* most clearly seen this way. Similarly, many Christians assume that the righteousness of God is most clearly described in the Ten Commandments. I say, NO, not "most clearly." Others say His righteousness is clear in The Sermon On The Mount (see Matthew chapters five through seven). Again I say, no. And what about Jesus' healings, given freely to multitudes of hurting people? And what about the feeding of the five thousand and the four thousand, and so forth, and so on? Aren't all these things the righteousness of God? Well, yes. . . and no!

The whole reason why God's righteousness is a baffling riddle, an enigma to most everyone is that we tend to define it in terms of our own perceptions of righteousness, and, by extension, in terms of our own understanding of justice. Get prepared for a shock.

The clearest expression of the righteousness of God is in the justification of sinners. You see how totally enigmatic *that* sounds? But look, Romans 3:21-26:

21. But now apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,
22. even *the* righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction;
23. for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
24. being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus;

25. whom God displayed publically 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;

26. for the demonstration, *I say*, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

Note **FIRST** that the righteousness of God has been manifested **APART FROM THE LAW!** Wow, now that seems to be a serious enigma, in and of itself! The Law and the Prophets are simply witnesses to this. Then note: The righteousness of God is demonstrated primarily in the justification of sinners through Christ, the just exchanged for the unjust. Thus, Paul said,

God is just in doing this.

Thus, the clearest, the most recent, the most explicit demonstration of both the justice and the righteousness of God is in the free justification of sinners, as a gift by His grace. I.e., you can trust Christ alone to be your justifier. Period. What He finished for you at Calvary: That's all; that's enough. Ask Him to forgive all of your sins. He will; He wants to do this even more than you want Him to. Verse 26 says clearly that God Himself wants to be your justifier. Thus, you never need to try to justify yourself before Him again; you never have to make excuses again; you never need complex explanations for why He should accept you: You already *are* accepted. It is God's will to do it that way, OK? I know it violates our sense of justice, I know it seems an enigma. You might as well just accept it this way. He has provided no other way! Just Jesus, the Savior with the nail scars.