

## 281 What did Romans do for us?!

I've been a bit quiet of late, sorry; my enthusiasm dwindled (en-theo-ism – 'God in me'). I did get very excited by Psalm 103 – am still excited by it – David's vision, written **one thousand years** before Jesus: '[God] forgives all your sins', i.e. even before Jesus died!

But God led me out of the doldrums through my studies of **Romans** with Tom Wright, and I saw again the glorious vision of the Good News that is Jesus. Truly wonderful!

In my articles, I try desperately to be positive, but it's seeing the negatives in 'what I've always been taught'<sup>[e.g. 280]</sup> that inspires me to appreciate the positives. This is where my writing started,<sup>[1]</sup> trying to help friends and family who 'don't believe' (in what?!).

Tom (re-)lit my flame with his 'righteousness'. What does that word convey to you? 'Doing right'? Or maybe, slightly better: 'imputed righteousness', i.e. Jesus' death on the cross makes it 'just-as-if-I'd' never sinned (just-if-ied).

But Tom tells us that the Greek word is way bigger than our simplistic ideas of 'doing right and wrong', and so he translates it 'covenant justice'. (Here's his 3:21-24 – see how this massively expands our view of the gospel!)

But now, apart from the law (though the law and the prophets bore witness to it), God's **covenant justice** has been displayed. God's **covenant justice** comes into operation through the faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah, for the benefit of all who have faith. For there is no distinction: all sinned, and fell short of God's glory – and by God's grace they are freely declared to be in the right, to be **members of the covenant**, through the **redemption** which is found in the Messiah, Jesus.

The gospel is way more than the 'me-and-my-salvation' that we've been fed for decades (centuries?). It's about trusting (faith) the Person who, for millennia, has been drawing people into that covenant community, by whatever means was available at the time (e.g. Ps 103!).

We've been so keen to defend 'the truth of the gospel' that we have systematised it and ended up saying, effectively, 'The only way God **can** forgive sins is...' Indeed, what catalysed this article was my NIV Study Bible, which told me that the main purpose of Romans is 'to present the basic system of salvation'. (cf. Jesus' '*life in all its fullness*'.)

God can forgive sins (and always **has** forgiven sins – ask David!) in any way he darn well pleases – thank God! We limit what 'God **can** do' at our peril. So we can trust God for our friends and family, and we can trust God for those who have never heard about Jesus. Indeed, many of our F&F have 'never heard' – well, not about the REAL Jesus, but only the condemning, hell-wielding tyrant that the church has portrayed.

Don't worry, I'm not advocating universalism; but God's love is so great that to specify in theological detail, 'the only way God **can** save people', is to totally underestimate what Romans can do for us; indeed, to totally underestimate God.