



## Growth Group Discussion Questions

### 7. God is righteous to declare the unrighteous righteous

Read Romans 3:21-26

1. "BUT NOW..." *Discuss the relevance of these two words considering all that we have studied in Romans so far. What is the central difference between BC and AD? In what other ways would you describe the two ages?*
2. The 'righteousness of God' can mean different things. *Looking closely at the passage, in your own words fill in the table showing the different meanings of 'the righteousness of God' means:*

the Righteousness of God		
an attribute	a verb	a free gift
verse 35	verse 26	verse 22

3. *Why do we need God to give us His righteousness according to this passage?*
4. Look closely at verse 24 and 25. *In your own words, what is the 'mechanism' (terrible word I know), by which God is able to make us righteous? In other words, how does God make the unrighteous righteous? Or, in your own words, how would you describe 'the God's Great Exchange'?*
5. "Forgiveness and being declared righteous are two sides of one (Divine) Coin. If we were to split theological hairs, we could say the first saves us from Hell and the second gains us access to God in Heaven." *Discuss whether you agree with this statement.*
6. *What did God do with sins prior to Jesus Christ dying for us? What does the language in the passage point to? Hint: see Hebrews 10:4-10*
7. "So, let me get this straight, you think that because you trust in Jesus God is going to let you into heaven despite all the wrong things you admit you have done? How is that fair? What does that say about God's justice?" *In your own words how would you answer someone who asked you this?*

## Leaders Notes

1. These two words are not just a break in Paul's thinking as if he is moving on to a new subject. These two words carry immense weight. They signal the dividing line between two very different eras or epochs or ages or whatever you want to call it. Even our modern calendar is in some way marked by this: BC – before Christ and AD – anno domini, 'in the year of our Lord'. Jesus Christ has divided all of history into the time before His coming and the time after. The central difference is that sin had not been finally dealt with until Jesus Christ came. Jesus also separates the age of law from the new age that He has introduced: the age of grace. Or, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.
2. The 'righteousness of God' means different things, although each necessarily entails the other.

the Righteousness of God		
an attribute	a verb	a gift
Righteousness is something God has, i.e. He is righteous. verse 35, "This was to show God's righteousness"	Righteousness is something God does. Everything He does is righteous. verse 26, "so that He might be righteous (just) and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."	Righteousness is also something God gives freely by His grace. verse 22, "the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe."

3. The passage tells us clearly that we 'all fall short of God's glory'. This is not just that we don't reach God. It means more than that. It means that we fall short of the glory for which we were created. Genesis 3 describes what theologians call 'the Fall'. That was the fall of man. Adam and Eve fell from glory. Psalm 8:5 tells us that man was crowned with glory and honour because he was made in God's image. But, we have all fallen short of God's glory. Therefore we have absolutely no righteousness of our own and we need God to provide it for us.
4. Yes, mechanism is a terrible word. But it does capture the idea that there was a very particular 'means' or 'process' which enabled God to pronounce unrighteous people righteous. It is so important that GG members can explain this in their own words. The answer is simply this: God redeemed His people by giving Jesus as a sin-bearing substitute to take God's wrath instead of us. God exchanged His Son for us. He got our sin and punishment. We got His righteousness and therefore God's stamp of approval: righteous.
5. Righteousness and forgiveness are two sides of the same coin, or two aspects of the one transaction of salvation. Forgiveness would just make you neutral. You wouldn't go to Hell. Righteousness is necessary to gain access to God and heaven. But this is splitting hairs because they can never be separated – they are two sides of the same coin. However, it is helpful to think this way so that people can understand what each means.
6. Before Christ died, God patiently 'passed over' sins. That is, He overlooked them in His patience. He did not deal with them. He waited patiently until the right time when Jesus came and died and dealt with sins 'once and for all'. The language comes from Exodus where the Angel of Death passed over God's people, which means they were spared from God's judgement. Even there the Passover lamb that was slain points to THE Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Hebrews explains all of this clearly although the passage referred to only deals with one aspect: the Old Testament sacrifices never actually took sin away. They were pointers pointing to the time when God would take sin away 'once and for all' – through the death of Jesus Christ.
7. Up to the GG members. The point of this question is to summarise in their own words the central message of the whole passage. This encourages and helps people to explain the gospel

to their friends. One simple way to say it is this: Because of what Jesus Christ did by dying instead of us, God is right to declare the unrighteous righteous!