

## THE THREE "BEARS"

This article is not about the famous fairy tale. It is about the three "bears" listed in Galatians 6 which are vital to our security in Christ and our salvation. We need to spend some time thinking about these "bears" and evaluate what our response to them has been in the past. Allow me to introduce these "bears" to you.

1. "Bear ye one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2). First we notice this "bear" is in the present tense which denotes continuous action. It is simply not a one-time act. We don't bear another's burden one time and then call it quits. We should always be bearing, as opportunity arises.

In context, the burdens seem to relate to the sorrows, distresses, and frailties brought about by sins. It is a spiritual burden which concerns us, not physical ones, although sometimes physical hardships can bring about emotional anxiety.

When a brother sins, we must come to his aid. We must help him bear and overcome that burden. James agrees with what Paul is saying here and also tells us how to do it: "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (Jas. 5:16).

We help bear another's burdens by first relating to that person. We make clear our own weaknesses (confess our faults) and therefore show that we can understand the weaknesses in others. I can better help you bear your burden if I've been there before, right?

Consider an illustration of a man who comes to Christ from a horrible moral background. Some of sin still clings to him. He longs to be like others who "don't struggle" with it. To confess what he is personally ashamed of is hard enough, but to do so to those who would be embarrassed by him or those who wouldn't understand is too much. So he withdraws and receives no help. What a difference we can make if we help him bear that burden!

2. "*For every man shall bear his own burden*" (Gal. 6:5). This passage teaches the need for personal responsibility that another cannot carry for us. There are some burdens that only we can "bear".

The Apostle Paul wrote: "*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*" (2 Cor. 5:10). We will all have to answer for ourselves, won't we? Thus, we can see we have many responsibilities in regard to:

-Sin. I am responsible for my own sins and must bear those burdens myself. I cannot lie or gossip to shift blame to others.

-God. I also have certain responsibilities toward God. I cannot pay/hire another to worship and praise and serve God on my behalf.

-Family. As part of a family, I have specific duties which no one else can fulfill for me: Husband/Father/Wife/Mother/Children/Grandparent, etc.

-Church. I must bear my own burden as a member of the church, whether it is my turn to speak, wait on the table, mow the grass, clean the building, prepare the bread, straighten out the songbooks, arrange the flowers, etc.

-World. As a Christian I also have personal obligations to the world. I must bear the burden of being a law-abiding citizen and a godly influence.

-Self. I even have responsibilities to my self, to take care of my God-created body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).

3. "*For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*" (Gal. 6:17). Those marks in His body were "battle scars" obtained in warfare, while He was fighting to give us eternal salvation, while He was suffering on the rugged cross.

We must be willing to suffer, to bear those marks, like Paul did (2 Cor. 11:23-33). While we may never have to bear physical marks in our bodies, are we willing to bear the marks that come from:

-Ridicule? Friends may make fun of us.

-Anger? Enemies might get mad at us and hold a grudge.

-Misrepresentation? False teachers may spread lies about us.

-Isolation? Friends and family members may desert us for taking a stand.

Would we sacrifice our body for Christ? or will we bear the mark of the beast in our right hand or in our foreheads? (Rev. 13:16)

If we acquaint ourselves with these three "bears", we will be well pleasing in the sight of God. Let us "bear" one another's burdens, "bear" our own burdens, and "bear" in our bodies the mark of Christ.

Adapted from a sermon by RAY MCMANUS  
(Deceased)

## APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Can you explain the phrase "the righteousness of God" that is found in Romans 1:17?

ANSWER: In order to understand a verse or even a particular phrase in a verse, it is of utmost importance to determine the context in which the verse or phrase is found. One of the biggest blunders that students of the Bible make is failing to determine context. Too many times we simply read the verse or phrase in isolation and then draw conclusions concerning it. This has led to many errors and in some cases serious errors in Biblical exposition.

In addition, determining context is not always as easy as it may appear. The approach used by many is to look at the verses immediately before and after the verse. In reality, context should be determined by examining the passage from three perspectives. First, we have the specific context. This involves looking at the specific verse or phrase in relation to the other words surrounding it. Second, we must read the specific statement in what is referred to as the immediate context. Here we study the verses immediately prior to and after the passage. Third, we must be aware of the remote context. This is done by respecting other verses throughout the Bible that have a bearing on the verse under consideration.

The phrase "the righteousness of God" is used extensively in the Book of Romans. In order for us to appropriately comprehend the meaning, it is necessary to determine the theme of Romans and Paul's usage of the phrase.

The epistle to the Romans is the most systematic teaching on the subject of mankind's biggest problem and God's solution to that problem. In it Paul follows a very organized thought process to establish God's means of providing salvation to man. In a nutshell, its purpose is to elaborate on and make clear the doctrine of justification by faith.

The phrase "righteousness of God" is first used in the epistle in Romans 1:17. We read beginning in verse 16,

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith.'" (NKJV)*

Here Paul makes note of several things concerning the Gospel. First, the Gospel is powerful. It is powerful due to the revelation it makes to man concerning salvation. Note that he tells us that in it, that is the Gospel, God's righteousness is revealed. Thus the power of the Gospel is found in that which it reveals.

Second, we note that it is applicable to all mankind. In Paul's time the world was thought of as people being either a Jew or a Gentile. Here he tells us that the Gospel is for all.

Third, we find that the preaching of the Gospel is the chosen method that God has to save mankind. God chose to reveal His plan to the world through the foolishness of preaching.

Fourth, the salvation that God offers is conditioned upon faith. This is in contrast to the idea that in order to be saved one had to be good enough to merit forgiveness.

From these four truths Paul then begins to establish the doctrine of justification by faith and reveal to us the righteousness of God.

The epistle begins with an exposition on the plight of mankind. Paul dedicates almost three chapters to establishing the fact that all are sinners. He begins with the sins of the nations and offers an explanation for the rise of paganism. He points out that it was not that man had insufficient revelation to believe but that man chose not to. They deliberately suppressed the truth that God had given. The result was,

*"Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things." (Rom. 1:22-23, NKJV)*

In chapter two he turns his attention to those who thought of themselves as good moral people. The problem here of course is

that good moral people really don't exist, and those who think of themselves as such will not receive the Gospel, for in their minds it is not applicable to them. Paul states,

*"Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."*  
(Rom. 2:1, NKJV)

In chapter three he turns his attention to the Jews. He begins by asking what advantage does the Jews have? He shows that as to sin they have no advantage.

In the latter part of chapter three he reaches His conclusion. There is none righteous! All have sinned and thus all are in need of the Gospel. He then contrasts the means of salvation by faith with that of being good enough. His argument is plain and very simple to understand. Since all have sinned then no one can be saved by being sinless. Thus there is no salvation for man based on perfect behavior. If it requires sinlessness on our part to be saved, then none will be saved for there are no sinless people!

Now we reach the meaning of the phrase, "righteousness of God". The argument is designed to make us ask, "If we cannot be saved by being good enough how then can we be saved?" Paul tells us by deeds of perfection no one will be justified in God's eyes. Then in verse 21 he writes,

*"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."* (Rom. 3:21-22, NKJV)

The righteousness of God is not about how righteous God is but is about how God has chosen to make sinful man righteous! The righteousness of God is His method of justifying man. It is through the atoning death of Jesus. It is by His blood that we are saved and not of ourselves. Paul continues and states,

*"being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith to demonstrate His righteousness."* (Rom. 3:24-25, NKJV)

Thus in answer to the question, "the righteousness of God" is the sum total of the Gospel. Only by Jesus will anyone be justified in His sight.

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## GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
March 18 - 20	Fayetteville Road Fairburn, GA	Kevin Mills (Newnan, GA)
March 23 - 27	Gilstrap Gilstrap, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
March 25 - 27	Napoleon Woodland, AL	Danny Abercrombie (Gay, GA)

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. According to Exodus, the altar of burnt offering was overlaid with what material?
2. In Second Chronicles, who were Jachin and Boaz?
3. What three examples of vanity did Jeremiah say Zion would display in the day of desolation?
4. Who said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father, and it will be sufficient for us"?
5. What does the letter from Paul to Philemon concern?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. In Judges, the first mention of a woman leading Israel is found. What was her name? DEBORAH (Judg. 4:4)

2. Before David died, he instructed Solomon to seek some level of revenge against what two people? JOAB AND SHIMEI (1 Ki. 2:5-9)
3. In Ecclesiastes Solomon said "the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong..." What did he say determines man's fate? TIME AND CHANCE (Eccl. 9:11)
4. After Jesus died on the cross, who went to Pilate to request possession of the body? JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA (Mark 15:43)
5. In Acts when Paul spoke to the Athenians at Mars' Hill, he mentioned an inscription he had read on an altar. What was the inscription? "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:23)