

# Are We Preaching “Another” Gospel: A 31-Day Journey toward Rediscovering the Gospel of the Grace of God

by C. D. Hildebrand, 24-7-365 Version 2026

## Day 6

### THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Under the Old Covenant, righteousness was based on keeping the law. Under the New, righteousness is a *gift* from God by faith in Jesus, purchased for us by His blood.

#### **Philippians 3:7-10**

*But what things were gain to me (my religious pedigree and obedience to the law—see the preceding verses), these I have counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup> Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things,<sup>1</sup> and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in Him, **not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.***

We know we are righteous by faith at *salvation*, but the perception of most believers is that *after* salvation, we are righteous by means of not sinning and by doing what is right.

**We need to see that this way of “living” is what Jesus Christ died to *change*.**

Righteousness derived from refraining from sin, doing works, and practicing spiritual disciplines is nothing less than *self-righteousness* (v 9).

The problem with self-righteousness (law-based righteousness) is it is inadequate. What if someone (a non-believer) were very disciplined and motivated and able to live a perfect life; never sinning and *always* doing *everything* from pure motives and for the good of others; loving God with

---

<sup>1</sup> Traditionally, it has been taught that the things which Paul counted as rubbish and forsook were the sins of his past and worldly pleasures and that we would be wise to follow his lead. On the contrary, he was not referring to anything unlawful in his life, rather how well he kept the law and how godly he lived! Are we able to tell our congregations to forsake following the law as a means of righteousness and seek the righteousness that comes by faith?

all of his heart, and all of his strength, and in every thought, word, and deed—even giving most of his fortune to help the needy? Would that person be righteous before God under the New Covenant? Absolutely not! We know and are persuaded that no one apart from Christ will stand before God and declare that he is righteous, even if he is perfect in every way, even if he *never* sinned, because all are *born* unrighteous. Before Christ, we are sinners in need of righteousness. We are dead in need of life. The *only* way sinful man can be righteous and come alive is through faith in Jesus Christ.

### **Romans 5:12-17**

*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—*

*<sup>13</sup> For until the law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.*

*<sup>15</sup> But the free gift is not like the offense. **For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.***

*<sup>16</sup> And the **gift** is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the **free gift** which came from many offenses resulted in **justification**. <sup>17</sup> For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more **those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life (in life will be reigning) through the One, Jesus Christ.***

Righteousness, the righteousness of God, is a **gift**. It can never be earned under the New Covenant, before salvation or after. **On the contrary, we are not righteous by living righteously; we live righteously because we have been given righteousness.**

We have missed this glorious truth almost entirely, though some of us might be able to express it doctrinally. This fact is most clearly evidenced by the constant call from the pulpit to “get right with God”, especially in youth groups. What we are saying when we make this plea is that those listening are *not* right with God because they sinned or because they haven't been doing enough good, and that in order “to *get* right with God,” they need to stop sinning or begin to do more of what is good—and there is always more good that one can do making it impossible to do enough. This throws our religion back to righteousness derived by keeping laws—and we become guilty of preaching the very “other” gospel about which Paul expressed his deepest concern.

This amazing **gift** of righteousness seems too good to be true, so we

redefine terms to make it more palatable. We say, “We are *positionally* righteous, but in actuality, we are not righteous unless we *live* righteously.” Any way we express it, as soon as we base our righteousness on obedience, either to do what is “right” or to not do what is “wrong,”<sup>2</sup> we are placing ourselves and those who hear us under religious law. We are compelling them to endlessly attempt to perfect themselves in the flesh (in their own strength), which is a futile effort.

Under the New Covenant, righteousness—perfect right-standing before God, is and can only ever be a *gift* because it was purchased *for* us by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and cannot be merited. We are not only righteous by faith in the sense that Abraham was righteous (because he believed God and thus righteousness was imputed to him), we have been *made* the very righteousness of God through the offering of Christ!

### **2 Corinthians 5:21 Mounce**

*He made him who knew no sin to be a sin-offering for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Hear this! We *are* righteous *apart* from religious law. If we aren’t, then Jesus Christ was rejected and falsely accused, despised and beaten, crucified and spilled out all of His precious blood for no purpose!!! We need to see that when we pervert the *gift* of righteousness into something that is *developed* by our *own* efforts, the flesh, we are robbing *Him* of what *He* did for us. We are saying that what He did was insufficient—that He was only able to give us a “standing” but not an “actual” righteousness.

### **Galatians 2:21 Amplified**

*[Therefore, I do not treat God’s gracious gift<sup>3</sup> as something of minor importance and defeat its very purpose]; I do not set aside and invalidate and frustrate and nullify the grace (unmerited favor) of God. For if justification (righteousness, acquittal from guilt) comes through [observing the ritual of] the Law, then Christ (the Messiah) died groundlessly and to no purpose and in vain. [His death was then wholly superfluous.]*

The law is good. God made the law, and what He makes is perfect. However, the law of Moses had a precise purpose for a specific people and for a limited time. It was never meant to be permanent. It was given ***until***

---

2

I put “right” and “wrong” in quotes because these standards vary from church to church.

3

What gift? The gift of righteousness.

Jesus died, but after Jesus died and faith in Christ came, the law was no longer necessary for those who believe.

### **Galatians 3:21-25**

*What purpose then does the law serve? It was added because of transgressions, **till** the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was appointed through angels by the hand of a mediator. <sup>20</sup> Now a mediator does not mediate for one only, but God is one. <sup>21</sup> Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For **if** there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law. <sup>22</sup> **But** the Scripture has confined all under sin, **that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.** <sup>23</sup> **But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. <sup>24</sup> Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. <sup>25</sup> But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.***

How we missed verse 25 for so many years still baffles us. In fact, just the other day, when we quoted it to a friend to show that we are no longer under the law, someone who has been a Christian nearly as long as we have, he replied, "That's not in the Bible—is it?" Yet it is crystal clear to us now. We no longer need a tutor, for the law has been replaced by grace, our new teacher.

### **Titus 2:11-14**

*For the **grace** of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, <sup>12</sup> **teaching us** that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, <sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us, that **He** might redeem us from **every** lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, **zealous** for good works.*

The law was never meant for those who receive righteousness as a gift by faith, but for sinners. In other words, the law *does* serve a purpose, but not in the life of a believer, not for the righteous.

### **1 Timothy 1:8-11**

*But we know that the law is good **if** one uses it lawfully,<sup>4 9</sup> knowing this: that the law is **not made for a righteous person**, but for the*

---

<sup>4</sup> Amplified: "for the purpose for which it was designed."

*lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners,<sup>5</sup> for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers,<sup>10</sup> for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine,<sup>11</sup> according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.*

Beloved, the law is not made for us. We are the righteousness of God apart from the law. We are the righteous. Faith has come! We do not need a tutor. Under the New Covenant, God writes His law in our hearts; not the law of Moses, the Old Covenant law, but the New Covenant law of Christ.<sup>6</sup> We no longer need to be told to “know the Lord”. We know Him. All believers know Him, from the one who was born again yesterday to those who have followed Him for decades; from the child who has faith in Him to the oldest among us; from the least esteemed to the most honored. We *all* know Him apart from the law because of what *He* did, His grace, and our faith in Him.

### **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

*“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a **new** covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—<sup>32</sup> **not** according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.<sup>33</sup> But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will **put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts**; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.<sup>34</sup> **No more** shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ **for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them**, says the Lord. **For** I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember **no more.**”*

Yet how many sermons have we heard and taught that emphasize “knowing” the Lord? Dear ones, the day we received Jesus by faith, we knew the Lord. Yes, we can learn more *about* Him, and our experience with Him obviously increases, but we all already know Him, and He knows us. To send a saint on an endless journey to obtain something that has already

---

5

Notice that Paul is making a distinction between a righteous person and a sinner. He is contrasting a believer with a non-believer.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. 6:2

been given in Christ is to negate what Jesus accomplished *for* us through His death and to plunge God's people into needless despair.

So then, "another" gospel can be simply defined as adding religious requirements (obedience to laws) to grace and faith for the purpose of maintaining or improving (perfecting) ourselves.

**What an astonishing realization was ours when we saw that almost everything we taught, that is being taught in churches, and that is written in countless Christian books today, is about how to maintain or improve our relationship with God!**

Because we, the church, perceive "the gospel" as only being for the lost, we hesitate to preach the "*glad tidings of good things*" to the saved. We don't teach them that they **are** the righteousness of God; we scold them for not living righteously. We keep insisting that we are still sinners when the truth is we are the righteous, and we scoff at those who teach otherwise. We fear that if we affirm our right-standing with God, our righteousness, some might run off helter-skelter and live like the unrighteous. We think it is our *responsibility* to continually point out shortcomings and call for repentance. Then we prescribe a self-improvement plan which includes not sinning and doing such things as praying more, reading the Bible more, reading this book or that one, or attending a conference.

We teach these religious requirements for righteousness with confidence because they are the same ones that were taught to us and the ones our teachers were taught by their teachers, who learned them from their own teachers, and on and on. **However "spiritual" these practices seem to be, however mainstream, however "good", when we begin to see them as *why* we are righteous before God as believers and as a means to preserve or build upon what Jesus accomplished by His death and resurrection, they become nothing more than an expression of self-righteousness.** They are self-perfection, the flesh—"another" gospel.

***Romans 5:19***

*For as by one man's disobedience many were made **sinners**, so also by **one** Man's obedience many will be made **righteous**.*