

The prosecutor (Paul) has presented the evidence, called up the testimony of his witnesses and summed it all up. The verdict? **ALL the world: Guilty as charged!**

What will the sentence be? The Judge is holy and righteous. The case is solid and complete, the witnesses united in their testimony. There is no hope! No hope of acquittal. No hope even of leniency. No hope of probation even after serving a substantial period of time. The length of sentence is **forever! Eternal punishment!** Eternal banishment from the blessings so taken for granted by earth dwellers. Banished from the presence of God. Banished from the light. Cast without. Cast into outer darkness. Into the blackness of darkness forever. To wander forever. To fiery heat. Pain. Fire in the darkness. Incredible, excruciating pain. Alone. Alone forever. Alone with a million "if onlys," but perpetually unrepentant. Time fixed, standing still for eternity. Suspended but falling. Perpetually falling. Continuous Weeping, Anguish, Anger, Gnashing of teeth! Gone out! But not annihilated. Just eternally gone.

But wait! There is someone before the Judge. Wait! It is the Judge Himself. He is saying something about **Righteousness and God.** Yes, we know. We are condemned under that righteousness. The righteousness spelled out in the Law. But He is saying "but." "But now!" But now righteousness of God is manifested.

Without law? Without Law!

Righteousness witnessed to by the Law and the Prophets. That's the Old Testament. Righteousness without law. Law only proves our condemnation is just. Not my righteousness! For that has been proven inadequate. But righteousness is shown forth by faith. Faith? Yes, by faith. Faith of Jesus Christ. Righteousness upon all them that believe. Not upon everyone alive. But upon all that **believe.** A limited group. Not limited by God. But limited by a person's willingness or unwillingness to believe. Willingness to bow humbly and confess they are a hopelessly lost soul without God.

Wait! Do you mean that God can and does righteously forgive us and our sins and counts us as righteous in His sight because Jesus Christ took our punishment and died in our place? Yes!!!! Substitute? Unbelievable? Well, yes and no. Believable if one desires to be saved. What an astonishing Plan. What incredible Love. What a marvelous gift. And this salvation was indeed foreseen and forecast by the Law and the Prophets in shadows and promises, in broad-brush outlines and down into minute details. Not understood by the selected Spirit led writers but made clear to us now. We could spend a lifetime just reading the Old Testament discovering this for ourselves.

*Psalm 85:10 Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other*

But who is eligible to receive this. **All** are qualified. All are invited. Because:

**"For all have sinned and [continually] come short of the glory of God."**

All, Old Testament and New, therefore are eligible. And all must repent. Those who lived before the cross, thousands of years before. Those who lived after the cross and live now almost two thousand years later. Those who live after the Resurrection/Rapture of saints during the Tribulation. Those who are born in the Millennium, the thousand year reign of the King, for they are sinners as well.

Eligible to be Justified. To be counted righteous, as righteous as if never having sinned. Those who trusted God before the Cross are provided for. They looked forward in faith, believing God. That faith was counted to them for righteousness. God looking forward to the Cross righteously forgave them and cleansed them.

We who live after the Cross look back are provided for. We see Him bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. It is no harder for the Eternal God to look forward from the past to the accomplished redemption of the Cross than for Him to look back at the accomplished redemption of the Cross. As in L. F. Hymn 215:

*... "Center of two eternities which look with rapt adoring eyes onward and back to thee — O Cross of Christ..."*

Justified!!! Freely, not earned, but done by the grace of God. How? Redemption paid by Jesus Christ. He is the MERCY SEAT. His Blood is there. His JUDGEMENT SEAT awaits only those who will not bow and acknowledge their sinfulness and come to the Mercy Seat. God is not just looking the other way and saying as it were "Oh that's all right, you meant well." He, in His infinite love, will ultimately righteously purge out all sin and uncleanness from His Creation. Or else suffering on earth would continue forever. He, in infinite grace, laid our sins upon the only righteous Man, His only begotten Son, the Man Christ Jesus. He righteously clears and forgives those sins for any and all who latch on to this provision. God doesn't lightly do away with the Law or ignore the righteousness it demands. No! By paying its penalties, in order to justify us in His sight, God actually establishes and affirms the validity and righteous application of the Law. He cannot justly punish the same sin twice. It's either me or Jesus who pays for my sins. By His grace I chose Jesus. Have you?

God is One God. He chooses to justify the Gentiles and Jews on the same principle, FAITH, and on the same basis, Substitution. The Jews, on the principle of faith, and the Gentiles by faith. The Gentiles were not on the principle of Law so are to simply come by faith. The Jews, having been on the principle of Law now come on the principle of faith. They must humbly switch their religion from works to faith. Either way, come. It's free!