

5 - JESUS, THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

GOD IS CRAZY ABOUT YOU

By Cherie Peters

The coolest thing I've ever experienced from God happened when I was a new Christian. I was trying so hard, but felt so unworthy. Here I was, a recovering drug addict, trying to do and be right. One day I felt so discouraged that I just bawled. I'd never be worthy of God! I'll never forget what happened next.

God showed me a past even—myself, unconscious on the floor of a crack house, overdosed on heroin. We'd desperately waited for the shipment. When it finally arrived, we measured out what we normally took, but it was way too potent.

There I lay on this filthy floor, and my panicked friends realized I wasn't breathing. I'd lost control of my bladder and bowels, so they dragged me into a cold shower and rubbed me with ice cubes. They scraped vomit out of my mouth and put their mouths over mine to breathe for me, but hey, it wasn't working. All this is what God showed me when I prayed that one day.

I have no memory of coming out of it. Just of coming to on the floor in that squalor. "God, why did You show me that?" I asked in horror.

"Cheri, I have always loved you," I felt Him kindly say. "I loved you just as much when you were lying on the floor in your own feces as I do now when you're trying to be 'good.' Please don't make this a behavior thing. I love you. You are My child."

Oh, how I needed to understand that early on in my recovery, and to have the assurance of His love. For understanding His love allowed me to change in response to Him, not because I had to. Because God loves me, I want to be more like Him. I want to be healed emotionally, physically, and spiritually. God had a work for me to do, but first I had to know that He loved me—unconditionally.

Then I read Psalm 51:10-13 and cried like a baby. All of a sudden it hit me, God saying, “Cheri, I want you to get this and then tell someone else. People are overwhelmed by not feeling worthy to sit in My presence, but I will make them worthy.”

He loves you, too, in just the same way, whether you’re struggling with an eating disorder, your finger jammed down your throat, or screaming or drinking or drugging . . .

The only way I can help hurting, recovering people is if I understand the depths of God’s love for them. God says, in essence, “Your past and your struggles don’t turn Me against you. I can help you.” God gives us forgiveness and repentance—true sorrow for sin, for what we did to ourselves and to others—then tells us, “Go find someone to tell what I did for you.”

GOD’S TOUCH

By age 13 I was homeless and on the streets. Ten years later God took me off the streets. I learned to read, went back to school, got my GED and a nursing degree, and started working with psych patients in rehab. I worked there for 15 years, frustrated because I could tell my patients, “If you take this medicine and go to therapy, you’ll get better,” but was not allowed to tell them how much God loved them and that only God could bring true healing.

I prayed for years that God would give me a ministry. Then in 1996 God made it possible for me to begin ministering to teens and anyone else at risk. (And we’re all at risk!) We call it True Step Ministries.

One of the first teens who came to us was a 17-year-old girl I’ll call Katie. Even though her mom flew her to Idaho from Oklahoma, Katie insisted that she had no problems. “My mom is crazy,” she said. I had some meetings coming up in Oregon so took her with me. A friend, Chris, came along to help drive so I could sleep. I woke up when Chris stopped to check on a racoon lying beside the road. It was injured, and immediately Chris and Katie decided to take it to a vet.

“It’s going to die,” I said.

“I’m not going to leave it,” Chris said. “It’s got to have help.”

Not long before that, Chris's 22-year-old son had died from his drug abuse. I knew she was crying for her son, not the raccoon. I snuggled down in the back seat with the coon on my lap. Sensing it was dying, I cuddled it close, prayed over it, and sang while Chris and Katie cheerfully planned the fun they'd have when it was well.

We rolled on through the darkness. The little coon grew limp in my arms. I held it for a good five minutes before I had the heart to tell them it was dead. Chris pulled off the road to bury it, but as we were placing "Boo Boo" into the ground we saw a bear. Screaming, we leaped back into the car. Then, silly with relief, we laughed until Katie's laughter choked into sobs. "I feel like I'm dying on the side of the road and no one is picking me up," she cried.

KATIE'S SECRET

Katie told us that at age 15 she'd been raped by six boys at a party her parents had forbidden her to attend. For two years she'd kept the agonizing secret, but had grown so angry at her parents and God and the church that she started acting out with drugs, sex, and violence.

Every talk and every drama we heard that weekend was on forgiveness and healing. It was exactly what Katie needed, and as we watched, God miraculously healed her. No, Katie didn't need forgiveness for the rape itself, but for all the junk she had added to her life after the rape.

Katie eventually understood that the rape was not a punishment for disobeying her parents. It was never God's intention that abuse of any kind happen to us. Katie came to see that Satan has an agenda, and that he roams around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). He almost succeeded with Katie, but God never let go, and she finally saw His love and accepted His healing power.

Since that time, in both the U.S. and abroad, Katie has ministered to those in bondage as a result of sexual abuse and addictions.

To order the book, "God is Crazy About You," go to www.truestep.org.

UNASHAMED OF THE GOSPEL

1. Why was Paul not ashamed of the gospel? Romans 1:16

God is not counting any of our sins against us no matter who we are or what we have done. No wonder Paul was not ashamed! He urges everyone to embrace this truth and choose to be reconciled to God. Those who do will experience peace with God and the transforming power of His love and grace. (2 Cor. 5:19,20; Rom. 15:13; 12:1,2; John 8:32; 14:27).

2. What does the gospel reveal? Romans 1:16,17

The righteousness of God is revealed by the “gospel of Christ.” The story of Jesus’ perfect life, death, and resurrection enables:

1. God to be revealed as righteous and just when justifying and forgiving sinners (Rom. 3:21-26; 4:5; 1 John 1:9).
2. Us to be counted righteous in Christ while He is transforming us into His likeness (Rom. 3:23, 24; 4:3-6; 10:3,4; 12:1,2; 2 Cor. 5:14-21).

3. How is the righteousness of God revealed? Romans 1:17

From [Jesus] faith to [our] faith. Jesus is “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb.12:2). His faithfulness in being “obedient to the point of death” and taking “away the sin of the world” created the truth our faith is based on (Phil. 2:8; John 1:29). Our faith in Jesus and faithfulness in life will grow as we abide in Him and let Him and His truth abide in us (John 15:4-7).

Out from (ek) faith into (eis) faith: (Greek words: ek refers to origin; eis to destination; the noun pistis means faith, faithfulness, conviction.

4. What is faith based upon according to Hebrews 11:1

Faith is based on evidence. The word “sub-stance” came from Latin. Sub means **under**, like in sub-marine. Stance can refer to the way a person is

standing physically or to an intellectual stand a person has taken. The Greek word hupostasis has the same meaning. Hupo means **under**; stasis means to **stand**. This information can help us understand that faith is what:

1. We “under – stand,” based on the evidence we observe or are given.
2. “Stands–under” us; our foundational beliefs that influence our thoughts, which influence our emotions, choices, and actions.
3. We believe that leads us to pray to a God we cannot see, trust in His promises, and have the assurance of eternal life because of Jesus.

Sometimes people will ask, “What faith do you belong to?” They are asking, “What group do you belong to? What do you believe is the truth?”

Complex life on earth and the finely tuned universe provides evidence of an Intelligent Designer. History, fulfilled prophecy, archeology, and transformed lives provide more evidence the Bible is reliable.

An honest look at all the evidence led me to a strong conviction (or faith) that Jesus is the Creator of the universe and the Savior of the world. My faith did not make Him our Creator or Savior. The evidence created faith.

5. How does God relate to those who suppress the truth? Rom. 1:18-32 Notice especially verses 24, 26, and 28.

God honors the choices of those who persistently suppress the truth. He allows them to have their own way, knowing it will bring painful consequences. When it does, He still loves them and will help them when they call to Him for help. (John 3:19,20; 12:32; 16:7-13; Psalm 107).

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IS REVEALED

6. What does Paul conclude in Romans 3:19,20 after giving evidence in Romans 1:18 - 3:17 that no one is righteous?

Before Paul can focus on the gospel, he makes it clear that we are guilty and unable to be justified by keeping the law. When we recognize we need a Savior, it is good news to know Jesus is the Savior of the world.

7. The righteousness of God is referred to 4 times in Romans 3:21-26. How many sentences are in Romans 3:21-26 in the NKJV? _____

In the KJV there is one sentence. In the NKJV there are two. These verses are unified in explaining how God is righteous when He justifies us.

Jewish leaders tried to trap Jesus by bringing a woman to Him who had been caught in the act of adultery. They said “Moses . . . commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?” John 8:5.

Jesus faced a problem. How could He uphold the law and at the same time be gracious and forgiving to the woman and the Jewish leaders?

God faced the same problem with all humanity. Paul explains how Jesus’ perfect life and death enabled God to be righteous when justifying sinners.

8. What is revealed apart from the law? Romans 3:21

“The righteousness of God is revealed apart from the law.” Paul returns to the theme he introduced in Romans 1:16 and 17 when he said the righteousness of God is revealed through “the gospel of Christ.”

It is apart from the law, for we all have sinned and failed to earn eternal life by keeping the law. It is consistent with the law and the prophets, for they promised the Messiah would be our Savior. He would even be called, “The Lord Our Righteousness” (Jer. 23:6,7; Isaiah 53; John 1:29).

9. Whose faith reveals the righteousness of God? Romans 3:21,22

____faith of Jesus KJV

____Our faith in Jesus NKJV

KJV – “. . . the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ...”

NKJV – “. . . the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ...”

The KJV is more consistent with what Paul wrote in Romans 1:16,17. “In it [the gospel of Christ] the righteousness of God is revealed.” The gospel of Christ is about what Jesus did. His faithfulness is what enabled God to be revealed as just and righteous when He justified us by His grace.

New English Translation: Translator & Study Notes for Rom. 3:22,26

FAITH OF JESUS: “Though traditionally translated ‘faith in Jesus Christ,’ an increasing number of NT scholars are arguing that “pistis Christou” and similar phrases in Paul (Romans 3:22,26; Galatians 2:16,20; 3:22; Ephesians 3:12; Philippians 3:9) involve a *subjective* genitive and mean Christ's faith or Christ's faithfulness.”

“The faith/faithfulness of Christ is not a denial of faith *in* Christ as a Pauline concept, (for the idea is expressed in many of the same contexts, only with the verb *pisteuo* rather than the noun [*pistis*].” Translating the phrase *pistis Christou* as the faith or faithfulness of Christ implies that Jesus is worthy of our trust, “for he himself is faithful” and trustworthy.

10. Is there a difference between “unto all and upon all?” Romans 3:22

Many translations leave out the words, “and upon all” because they believe it is simply a repeat of “unto all.” But Paul had a reason for including both.

Unto all – The righteousness of God is given to all, for we have “become the righteousness of God in Him” (2Cor. 5:21; 1Cor. 1:30). This gift enables God to qualify everyone for eternal life and restore our freedom of choice.

Upon all - The righteousness of God comes “upon all who believe” the good news and accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord. They are motivated by His love to live for God. They experience security in Christ that frees them to grow into maturity as they continue to live in fellowship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit (John 15:4-7; Gal. 5:22-24).

For there is no difference – Everyone needs a Savior, both Jews and Gentiles. The good news is, Jesus is “the Savior of the world” John 4:42.

11. Who is the subject of each phrase in Romans 3:23,24

- A. How many have sinned? _____ (23)
- B. Who falls short of the glory of God _____ (23)
- C. Who are “being justified freely by His grace”? _____ (24)

All have sinned: In the Greek “have sinned” is translated from the tense implying a onetime happening in the past. When Adam sinned, we all sinned in him. Adam was guilty. We are not guilty as a result of his choice, but we all were condemned because of it (Romans 5:12-18).

All . . . fall short of God’s glory: We also fall short by our own choices. Without a Savior, we are slaves to sin (John 8:34; 15:5; Romans 7:18-23).

All . . . being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: We begin to grasp the unconditional love of God when we understand Jesus has justified all freely by His grace.

Redemption is a legal transaction. Jesus purchased all of us with His blood. Those who deny “the Lord who bought them” will “bring on themselves swift destruction.” (2 Peter 2:1 1 Cor. 6:19,20; 1 Peter 1:18).

When Jesus gave His life as a “ransom for all,” He redeemed us “from the curse of the law.” In Christ we all died the death we deserved. This is how God justified everyone “freely by His grace” and restored our freedom of choice (1 Tim. 2:6; Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:14,19,20; Rom. 6:23).

God’s love and righteousness are revealed by His choice to redeem the human race and justify everyone by His grace through Jesus. We did not ask Him to do this. We could not have comprehended this was possible. This truth is such good news, many have a hard time believing it.

However, the one who does “believe on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness” (Rom. 4:5). To put it more simply, his faith is counted as right. (The Greek word is also translated as right.)

God “justified [everyone] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” Romans 3:23,24. We believe this because it is true, not to make it true. (I used to think my faith is what made me justified.)

12. Did God appear to be a liar when He let sinners live? Rom. 3:25

Yes

No

God said, “Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” Gen.2:16,17. After Adam and Eve ate from the tree, they continued to live. Did God lie?

Young's Literal Translation provides a clue. "In the day of thine eating of it—'dying thou dost die.'" The dying process began immediately. Eventually they would die and "return to the ground" Genesis 3:19.

Adam and Eve had children and the human race began to multiply. Sin also multiplied. It appeared God was not being righteous and just, for "in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed" Rom. 3:25. Was He setting aside the law in order to keep us alive? If "the wages of sin is death," why were sinners continuing to live?

Righteousness includes both mercy and justice. God embraces both, hoping to win the hearts of all so they will want to be reconciled to Him (Ex. 34:6,7; Micah 6:8; 2 Cor. 5:20).

When Jesus died for the sins of the whole world, justice was fully met, for in Christ we all did die the death we had earned. (1 John 2:1,2; Rom. 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:14; Galatians 2:19,20). Jesus' death revealed that God is righteous and just when He "justifies the ungodly" Romans 4:5.

13. In the NKJV, does Rom. 3:23,24 contradict 3:26? ___ Yes ___ No

23,24 "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

26 "...to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

In Romans 3:24, all who are redeemed by Jesus are justified. Since Jesus "gave Himself a ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6), Paul confirms that all were justified "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

In verse 26, the only ones who are justified are those who first have faith in Jesus. It appears Paul is contradicting himself. Three points bring clarity.

The box on the next page is from Biblehub.com. It shows the last part of verse 26 from the interlinear option. The first line is Strong's Dictionary numbers. The second line is the English way of pronouncing the Greek words in the third line. The fourth line is the literal English translation.

1. The translators ignored the word “ek,” which means out of or out from.
2. The translators added four words because of the common belief that our faith is what makes us justified. The words added are in bold: “that He might be just and the justifier of the *one who has* faith *in* Jesus.”
3. The word translated faith is a noun. The NKJV treats it as a verb by implying we must exercise faith in Jesus in order to be justified.

1342	2532	1344	3588	1537	4102	2424
dikaion	kai	dikaiounta	ton	ek	pisteōs	Iēsou
ΔΙΚΑΙΟΝ	καὶ	δικαιοῦντα	τὸν	ἐκ	πίστεως	Ἰησοῦ
just	and	justifying	the [one]	of	faith	of Jesus

Here is a literal translation of verse 26: “to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier out of the faith or faithfulness of Jesus.” (Review again the NET note on page 85).

Jesus’ faithfulness enabled God to be just when we were “justified freely by His grace.” Paul is not focused on who is justified, but on how God is able to be righteous and just when He “justifies the ungodly” Rom. 4:5.

14. What does the law of faith exclude? Romans 3:27-30

A law is a constant force or principle that is reliable. The law of gravity is unchanging. The rotation of the earth, the orbit of planets around the sun, and photosynthesis in plants are examples of other laws that we trust.

The law of faith is also reliable. It refers to the established truth that Jesus made us acceptable to God through His perfect life and death. The law of faith excludes boasting, for we are helpless to do any good by ourselves.

15. Does faith set aside God’s law? Romans. 3:31, YLT

Young’s Literal Translation has “Law then do we make useless through **the** faith.” Paul wrote “the faith” to clarify He is referring to the faith or faithfulness of Jesus that revealed the righteousness of God.

Setting aside God's law would be the opposite of righteousness. Embracing what Jesus accomplished upholds the law.

The law says we must die. The gospel says, in Christ we did die. The law says we must have righteousness to have eternal life. The gospel says that in Christ we are righteous. (2 Cor. 5:14,21; Galatians 2:19,20).

16. Read Galatians 2:16 in the NKJV and the KJV? Who's faith or faithfulness enables us to be justified? ___ Jesus faith ___ Our faith

(Note: This verse is included in the NET translator notes on page 85.)

An Added Word

Paul used the Greek word translated "in" one time in this verse - after the verb "believed." The NKJV adds it after the nouns "**faith**," treating them like a verb and implying we are justified by exercising our faith in Jesus.

NKJV

“. . . a man is not justified by the works of the law but by **faith in** Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by **faith in** Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified." ("*in*" is added twice.)

KJV

We are "not justified by the works of the law, but by the **faith of** Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the **faith of** Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Justified by the faith of Jesus or by our faith in Jesus: In verse 16, Paul emphasizes that no one is justified by works. Instead, we all are justified by the faith or faithfulness of Jesus. We believe His perfect life and death justifies us and makes us acceptable to God because it is true. This truth is the law of faith, a solid foundation to build our lives upon.

A distorted gospel leads to selfish motivation: When we believe that our faith makes us justified and acceptable to God, the gospel becomes distorted. It turns our faith into a form of merit and leads us into legalism, serving God so we can be acceptable to God and go to heaven.

When we don't feel we are growing like we think we should be growing, it is easy to ask, "Am I really justified? Maybe I don't have enough faith or the right kind of faith. If I don't have enough faith for sanctification, how do I know if I have enough faith to be justified. Insecurity grows.

In a subtle, sub-conscious way, legalism creeps into our lives as we think, "If I really believed, I would be baptized, return tithe, go to church, do good works, pray more, study the Bible more, share my faith more.

We begin to feel we can never be good enough. At this point, some try harder, others give up trying, and others redefine what sin is, so they don't feel guilty when they do something they previously believed was wrong.

On the other hand, when we know we all were "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," we will believe we are justified because it is true, not to make it true. This frees us to live for Jesus motivated by loving appreciation for all He has done for us.

The Savior of the World

17. What does the grace of God bring? Titus 2:11

The NASB translates verse 11 in the same order that it is in the Greek. "For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men." Consistent with other passages in the Bible, Paul shares the good news that all were included in the salvation Jesus gave to the human race.

THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

- A. "The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" Isaiah 53:6.
- B. "John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'" John 1:29.
- C. Jesus "is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" John 4:42
- D. "Jesus. . . gave Himself a ransom for all" 1 Timothy 2:5,6.
- E. Jesus died for the sins of "the whole world" 1 John 2:2.