

The Righteousness of Another

Romans 10:1-4

March 6, 2005

Romans 10:1-4 - ¹ Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved. ² For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. [NKJV]

❖ Introduction

At the heart of the Christian gospel is a principle that our flesh often fights against and one that the carnal man cannot grasp—we are not saved by our obedience to God's law. In contrast to the myriad of various idolatrous religions that man has dreamt up throughout history, only in the Christian gospel do we find salvation by grace through faith. And this grace is not simply a benevolent deity pretending that no offenses actually occurred but instead it is the imputation of our sin upon the righteous and the imputation of righteousness upon the guilty. Put differently, the sins of others are imputed upon the Holy One and His righteousness is imputed on others.

This grace can actually be offensive to us and we see that Paul's countrymen had exchanged God's righteousness for one of their own. They were zealous for God but He was not primarily asking for zeal. They understood that they served a righteous God and that He commanded that they must themselves be righteous but instead of seeking grace from Him, they deceived themselves into thinking that they could devise a righteousness of their own—which really was no righteousness at all but rebellion. This righteousness of God is not just a standard of behavior but is the Lord Himself. Our Righteousness is *His name*. This means that there is nowhere for us to look other than Christ for our salvation.

❖ The Promised Righteousness of God

Jeremiah 23:5-6; Jeremiah 33:15-18

- .. Jeremiah was a prophet during the conquest of Judah by the Babylonians. He had suffered the persecution of his countrymen because he had warned of the impending judgment which God visited upon the nation. The Northern kingdom had already been conquered and was utterly non-existent. Jeremiah was the constant bearer of bad news and he was resented by the masses. But in these verses Jeremiah is speaking of the restoration of Judah and Israel and the raising up of a King, a branch of David and His name would be "The Lord Our Righteousness".
- .. In the Jeremiah 33 passage we have a very similar promise although here the restored people of God are closely aligned with God for they will be called by His name "The Lord our Righteousness".
- .. Notice that in both passages, God declares through Jeremiah that He (God) was going to do certain things. He would raise up the branch of David who would be King and this King will reign, prosper, execute judgment and execute righteousness in the earth and finally that He would bring salvation and peace. Of critical importance here is the realization that it is God (and His King) who are accomplishing all these things. This salvation was not something that the people would accomplish for God but rather something that He accomplishes among His people.
- .. This righteousness does not come to us as a contract where God performs part of the obligations and we perform the remaining. Our righteousness is not 98% God and 2% ours. This righteousness is fully God's work—even our belief in it. In Romans 3:9-10 Paul explains why God must be the author of 100% of our faith because of the condition we are in. This is because none of the sons of Adam are righteous, not even one.
- .. Notice also that after God does all these good things for His people, His people then call Him by His name. We are not *making* Him our righteousness, instead, we are *acknowledging* that which *He has already accomplished*. We are declaring the mercy He has shown and giving Him the glory that is due His name for He is our righteousness. Had God not done this good work in us, we would not be able to even speak these words for by our nature we were His enemies and we were spiritually dead.
- .. God reveals that our problem cannot be solved by ourselves. It cannot be solved by political action—the State is not a savior. The only place that we can turn to find relief from the law of God is to God Himself. His law was brought about to bring the knowledge of sin and then the understanding of our need for grace. When God gave His law to us it was a necessary part in God's mercy and salvation.

❖ Application

The Lord My Righteousness - 2 Corinthians 13:5-6

- “ Before the church is restored to her rightful glory and given the ability to call her Lord “the Lord Our Righteousness”, as individuals we must come to grips with this truth so that we are able to declare “the Lord *My* Righteousness”.
- “ Here Paul has been defending his ministry against those who have been troubling the church and spreading falsehoods about him. Note that he is writing this letter to Christians (cf. vs. 1:1) and not the pagans in Corinth. But he knows that some at the church in Corinth may not be true Christians and tells them to examine themselves to determine if they are *in the faith*. What would we look for? Would we look at how faithfully we have walked during this last week? If so, who then could stand—all would be condemned. Perhaps we introspectively consider our *intentions* and not our outward actions. Would this give any different of an outcome? What do we point to as the basis for our salvation? Paul gives the answer, when we evaluate ourselves are we looking to see if Christ is our righteousness? If it is anything but Christ and Christ alone, then we will be sorely disappointed in that final day.
- “ Beware of the slippery slope or the deceptive heart. Simply saying that Christ is my righteousness is not some incantation that we are required to recite at the proper moments. This isn’t about *saying* the right thing. This is about faith. This is about believing. If Christ is your righteousness then you will see evidence of His working in your life.
- “ Don’t attempt to do the math on this doctrinal truth. Some might ask, “What do you mean that the righteousness of one is transferred or imputed to another? How can that be? Isn’t this an injustice?” No, because in Christ the righteous requirements of God’s law were fulfilled. The law was upheld. The law was not trampled or set aside, instead it was satisfied by Christ and God did it this way because He is a righteous judge. But then by His grace and mercy He imputed that perfect obedience of His Son to you so that God would also be the Justifier. (cf. Romans 3:26)
- “ Just as Adam’s sin was transferred to all his descendants, so too, those who are in Christ have His righteousness transferred to them. Don’t fight against the idea of original sin because this principle of originality forms the foundation of our salvation—*original righteousness*. God isn’t performing this imputation between two mere individuals. Adam and Jesus are not just random individuals selected from among many—they are both *covenantal heads*. It is within the context of the covenants that God imputes to the descendants the attributes of the covenantal heads.

The election of grace, not works. - Romans 11:1-6

- “ Paul speaking in the context of national Israel makes a very important point that God has reserved those who are His and He has done this in accordance with His election of grace. The remnant are not those who have kept *themselves* pure, they are those whom *God has reserved for Himself*. He then goes on to contrast grace and works and explain how these two do not mix; the pure presence of one drives out the other.
- “ With this as the basis for our salvation, we are free to rest in Christ. This rest is not a nervous one where we are unsure on a daily basis if we are truly saved or not. Because salvation is 100% the work of God according to His purposes of election in grace, there is absolute rest found in Christ.

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