

THE SOURCE OF TRUE RIGHTEOUSNESS

BIBLE TEXT : Romans 2:17-29; 3:1-31; 9:30-33.

LESSON 382 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Romans 2:17-29

¹⁷ Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

¹⁸ And knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;

¹⁹ And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

²⁰ An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

²¹ Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

²² Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

²³ Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

²⁴ For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

²⁵ For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

²⁶ Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?

²⁷ And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

²⁸ For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

²⁹ But he *is* a Jew, which is one

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Condemnation of the Jew by the Law

1. All who claim to be Jews do not live according to the Law, Romans 2:17-25;

John 5:45

⁴⁵ Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, *even* Moses, in whom ye trust.

2. Uncircumcised Gentiles who keep the Law are a condemnation to those Jews who do not, Romans 2:26, 27;

Acts 10:1

¹ There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*,

Acts 10:2

² A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.

3. A true spiritual observance, rather than an outward form, is that which makes a true Jew, Romans 2:28, 29;

John 4:20-24

²⁰ Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.

²¹ Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.

²² Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.

²³ But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.

²⁴ God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

II The Righteousness of God and Guilt of Man

1. The Jew has many advantages, Romans 3:1, 2;

Romans 1:16

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Acts 3:25-26

²⁵ Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

²⁶ Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

Acts 13:46

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

Psalms 147:19

¹⁹ He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.

Psalms 147:20

²⁰ He hath not dealt so with any nation: and *as for his* judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

2. The failure of some Jews is not the fault of the Law, Romans 3:3, 4;

inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God.

Romans 3:1-31

¹ What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision?

² Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

³ For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?

⁴ God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.

⁵ But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is* God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man)

⁶ God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?

⁷ For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner?

⁸ And not *rather*, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

⁹ What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;

¹⁰ As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

¹¹ There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

¹² They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

¹³ Their throat *is* an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps *is* under their lips:

¹⁴ Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness:

¹⁵ Their feet *are* swift to shed blood:

Hebrews 4:2

² For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*.

3. God's righteousness is manifest in His judgment, Romans 3:5-8;

Revelation 16:5-7

⁵ And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

⁷ And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments.

4. No man can be justified by the doing of good works, Romans 3:19, 20;

Titus 3:5

⁵ Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Galatians 2:16

¹⁶ Knowing that a man is 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.

5. All have sinned, Romans 3:9-18;

Psalms 14:1-3

¹ The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good.

² The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God.

³ They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.

Isaiah 53:6

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

III Justification by Faith

1. Righteousness is by faith, Romans 3:21-28;

Habakkuk 2:4

⁴ Behold, his soul *which* is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

2. God justifies both Jew and Gentile by faith, Romans 3:29-31;

Galatians 3:7-9

⁷ Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

⁹ So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.

3. Israel misses the mark, Romans 9:30-33.

NOTES:

Outward Observation

The Jews who instructed others in the Law, were condemned by the very Law that they taught. Their observation was of the letter of the Law and not of the spirit. Jesus said. "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness" (Luke 11:39). They were careful of little outward details, but "omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith" (Matthew 23:23). "Woe unto you, Pharisees! For ye tithe mint

¹⁶ Destruction and misery *are* in their ways:

¹⁷ And the way of peace have they not known:

¹⁸ There is no fear of God before their eyes.

¹⁹ Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

²⁰ Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

²¹ But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

²² Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

²³ For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

²⁴ Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

²⁵ Whom God hath set forth *to be* a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

²⁶ To declare, *I say*, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

²⁷ Where *is* boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

²⁸ Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

²⁹ *Is he* the God of the Jews only? *is he* not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also:

³⁰ Seeing *it is* one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.

³¹ Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Romans 9:30-33

³⁰ What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after

and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God" (Luke 11:42).

Many a person today calls himself a Christian and is active in good works, but is as void of true salvation as were these Jews. They pride themselves in the Scriptures and live moral lives, but trust in a mental acceptance of Jesus. They fall short of true repentance. They are ignorant of the transforming grace of God, which enables them to live a sinless life. Claiming to be under the protection of the Blood of Christ, they are guilty of the same sins as those who make no profession of godliness. "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking of the law dishonourest thou God?" (Romans 2:23).

The Jews were marked by the rite of circumcision and other outward observances which were given in the Law, much as if a Christian of today wore a cross or some other emblem to designate him as a Christian. The Jews had begun to look on these outward signs as an assurance of their righteousness. In other words, if they wore a tag it was evidence of their righteousness. Let us look at it this way: suppose one were asked, "Are you a Christian?" He, in turn, would point to a pin he was wearing and reply, "Of course, don't you see my badge?"

Inward Righteousness

In the Epistle to the Romans, God is pointing out to the Jews that it is not the outward observances of the Law that make one a righteous person, as circumcision means nothing unless the life is holy. If someone claims to be a Jew, boasting himself in his being circumcised, it means nothing unless he lives a godly life.

A Gentile comes along whose life is godly, but has no circumcision about which to boast. How is it that he is able to live godly? It is because of his faith in Jesus. Righteousness, it is pointed out, is a matter of faith and not of the works of the Law. This is true regardless of whether we are Jews or Gentiles. A Gentile need not have the rites of the Law in order to be a Christian. Neither shall a Jew claim Christianity by the rites of the Law but by the faith he has in Christ.

Dishonouring God

"The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" (Romans 2:24). The failure of the Jews to live up to the high standard they professed gave occasion for the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of God. When David sinned, the Prophet Nathan said, "By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme" (II Samuel 12:14). The world looks for the fruits of Christianity in the lives of those who own His name. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (II Timothy 2:19). The conduct of a Christian on the job must be such as will honour God. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed" (I Timothy 6:1). Young women are instructed "to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:4, 5).

The Advantage of the Jew

The Jews did have an advantage over the Gentiles in that God chose them to be the medium through which His Law would be made known unto the world. "Unto them were committed the oracles of God." God gave Israel a righteous law by which to be governed. "What nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?" (Deuteronomy 4:8). They knew what was required of them

righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.

³¹ But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.

³² Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;

³³ As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

and that the transgression of the Law was sin. This knowledge of the Law, however, brought salvation only to those whose belief came by faith in Jesus Christ. "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6). "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Faith and Failure

"What if some did not believe? Shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect?" (Romans 3:3). The hypocrisy and failure of some to live up to the standard of the Gospel do not in any way prove the impossibility to attain to that standard. Shall we look at those who have failed in business and say that it is impossible to succeed? Shall we point to a counterfeit paper money (an exchange note) and say that there is no genuine currency?

The white of the lily contrasts most against the blackest of soils, and the light of the fire glows the brightest in the darkness of the night. Just so the clearness of the Gospel of Christ was manifest during the fog of Israel's unbelief. "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord:" (Romans 5:20, 21). The Law came to reveal sin; Jesus came to remove sin. "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins" (Romans 3:24, 25).

The spirit or essence of the Law cannot be kept by doing the works of the Law, but only through faith in Christ. "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified" (Romans 3:20). Those who lived godly lives under the period of the Law did so by faith. The Jews were justified by faith, even under the Law, as all true righteousness is by faith. God is God also of the Gentiles who are justified by faith.

No one is able by his own morality or good deeds to please God. "Without faith it is impossible to please him" (Hebrews 11:6). Whether Jew or Gentile there is only one way to please God and that is through faith in the redemption that Jesus provided for us in His death on the Cross. It is impossible to live a Christian life in our own strength. It can be done only after faith has brought salvation to our soul and God has imparted power to go and sin no more.

QUESTIONS

1. In what were the Jews placing their confidence?
2. With whom today can we compare the attitude of the Jew?
3. What advantage did the Jews have?
4. What is meant by our unrighteousness commending the righteousness of God? (Romans 3:5).
5. By what are the Gentiles justified? The Jews?
6. Why did not Israel attain righteousness?
7. Who was referred to as the stumbling stone that was laid in Zion?
8. Of whom was it stated that "there is none that doeth good, no, not one"?
9. What does the Law bring?
10. What did Jesus do that the Law could not do?