

Simply Christ

Gospel Newsletter

Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

December 16, 2017

Is There None Righteous?

Is it really true that no one is righteous? After all, didn't the apostle Paul say, "*There is none righteous, no not one?*" Well, not exactly. What he wrote was "*As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:*" Romans 3:10. He was quoting what the prophets who ministered under the Law had spoken about Israel. Paul continues quoting the prophets in the next verse saying, "*There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.*" Romans 3:11. What about you? Do you seek after God? Do you believe the apostles sought after God? Of course they did! If we are going to promote an absolute statement that there is none righteous then we must also promote that no one seeks after God. Neither of these statements fit the reality of the redeemed.

Paul explains these statements a few verses later when he writes "*Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law...*" Romans 3:19. These statements were written concerning those who were under the Law of Moses. The Jewish people accepted that the gentiles were sinners, but believed themselves to be righteous because of the Law. Paul was showing by the words of their own prophets that this self-righteous belief was a fallacy. No one has ever been made righteous by keeping the Law of Moses or any other religious law. The fact that Israel needed a religious law to live by in itself revealed that they were sinners.

Paul said, *“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.

Years ago I compared this verse (*there is none righteous, no, not one*) with another verse. The scripture says, *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived...”* I Corinthians 6:9. Paul was warning against the deception of those who claim unrighteous people will inherit the kingdom of God. I quickly saw that if *“the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God,”* and *“there is none righteous,”* then the kingdom of God would be empty since there would be no righteous people to inherit it. I knew there had to be a gospel “bridge” between these two statements.

Paul, the apostle who wrote both, *“as it is written there is none righteous, no, not one,”* and, *“the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God,”* also gave us the gospel “bridge” between these two statements. He said, *“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.”* Romans 5:19. The *“one man's disobedience”* spoken of here is the transgression of Adam. His disobedience brought sin into the world, and fallen humanity became its dwelling place. Through this fall, sin became the natural condition of the heart of every person. This is why many speak of sin as a “sin nature.” When sin is in your heart it is natural for you to sin.

Most Christians rightfully believe that Adam's offence made us to be sinners in every sense of the word (heart, soul, and act), but why is it so many have trouble believing the second part of Paul's statement, *“...so by the obedience of one*

shall many be made righteous”? *“The obedience of one”* he speaks of is the obedience of Jesus to the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:8. Jesus went to the cross to “undo” what Adam did to you. Adam’s transgression made you a sinner. Jesus died to deliver you from that bondage and make you righteous.

I hear many people say, “But that is only in the eyes of God.” Were we sinners only in the eyes of God? Or, were we sinners in heart, mind, and nature? Was Paul saying we were really righteous but God just saw us as sinners? Of course not! We all know better than that. Why then do we use doublespeak to nullify the word of God when it says Christ made many righteous? The apostle is making an exact comparison. The word he uses for “so” means “*in this way.*” In the same way that Adam made us to be sinners, Jesus made us to be righteous. Both changed the very essence of who and what we are.

Paul uses statements such as “*there is none righteous, no, not one*” and “*all have sinned*” to show the absolute need for Jesus’ death upon the cross to “*save his people from their sins.*” Matthew 1:21. Christ is the bridge from unrighteousness to righteousness. Aside from the redemption he purchased, there is nothing anyone can do to become righteousness because, although you may be able to change your actions, you cannot change your heart and nature.

It is impossible for any person to produce the righteousness God accepts. Some, understanding the futility of seeking to please God through our own “*righteousnesses*” Isaiah 64:6, have reasoned that God then simply accounts the righteousness of Jesus to us and proclaims us to be righteous.

Although this is almost universally believed, there is not a single verse in the Bible that says the righteousness of Jesus is accounted to anyone. Abraham's faith was accounted to him for righteousness, but he "*died in faith not having received the promises.*" Hebrews 11:13. His faith was indeed a righteous virtue, and so it is when anyone believes God. But the promise he died without is the promise of the Christ who was to come, not just to account you as righteous, but to make you to be "*the righteousness of God in him.*" II Corinthians 5:21. This is the promise we receive through faith in Christ Jesus. It changes who and what we are!