

LESSON THREE

EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS (Continued)

Scriptural Reference: Romans 1:18-4:25.

A. **RIGHTEOUSNESS NEEDED BY SINFUL MEN (Romans 1:18-3:20):**

1. EXPOSITION:

Righteousness is the key to man's relationship to God. Man is unrighteous and as such cannot fellowship a God of infinite holiness whose throne is established on righteousness. Man is guilty and can do nothing to retrieve his condition. If God has no righteousness for him, man is finished.

Man always pleads "not guilty." Before man can be brought to the knowledge of salvation, he must see himself completely guilty in the presence of God. The Apostle Paul, in this passage of Scripture, clearly shows that man is guilty before God and apart from the Lord, that there is no one who is righteous. He deals with this by showing four classes of people being guilty:

- a. The Heathen: (Romans 1:18-32). The heathen are without excuse. God is able to reveal Himself to man in any way He pleases. God can be known and in the past, God has revealed Himself to man through creation. It is clear that the things, which God has created, testify to his invisible nature. The reason for the darkness of this world is the rejection of light. The reason for the idolatrous systems of this world is the rejection of the knowledge of God. To reject God, to turn away from light, naturally brings darkness. Because men gave God up, He gave them up. Twice it is stated that God gave them up first to uncleanness and then to vile affections (verses 24, 26). Once it is said God gave them over, to a reprobate mind. As the heathen turned from light to darkness and from the knowledge of God to idolatry, it should be noted their downward steps of idolatry. First, images were made of man; secondly birds; thirdly beasts; and fourthly reptiles and creeping things. When people change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature rather than the creator, the whole order of nature is violated and man slips downward into utter vileness and filthiness.

The heathen described here had the opportunity to know the requirements of God. They knew that death is the penalty of evil action. Yet they not only sinned with pleasure, but also applauded others who were sinning.

- b. The Moralizer: (Romans 2:1-16). Paul here deals with the respectable sinner; the self-righteous man whom excuses himself in his own sins but condemns others. It is the world of culture and refinement that Paul deals with here. This type of sinner feels that other men's sins are worse than his are. He is actually the hypocrite. The sin of this man is that of being indignant at other people's sins but of being indulgent of his own. The mistake that he makes is a very common one. He is measuring himself with others. Instead of measuring themselves by somebody else, they should measure

themselves alongside of Christ, and when they do this, all grounds for hypocrisy and self-excuse will be swept away.

Culture does not cleanse the heart nor does education change the nature of man. Recognition of evil is not necessarily power to overcome the evil.

- c. The Jew: (Romans 2:17 - 3:8). Paul now shows that the Jews are also guilty before God. Jews, like all men, refuse to plead guilty. They plead religion as the basis of their action, but Paul let them know that God refuted their claim to innocence. Although they boasted of their religious privileges, their unchanged lives rendered all their claims void. Such action brought a greater condemnation upon them. Privilege increases responsibility. It did not set it to one side. Knowledge of the divine oracles gave to the Jew a standard of judgment that no others had; therefore he was inexcusable.
- d. The World: (Romans 3:9-20). After Paul had proven the case against both Gentile and Jew, he showed that the whole world was guilty before God. He uncovers the universality of sin. All were unrighteous and none were attempting to know God's way for them to erase their guilt. Paul also showed the totality of sin. Speech, action and vision were all contaminated because tongue, lips, mouth, ways and eyes were being yielded as instruments of unrighteousness. The whole world was guilty; hence the whole world needed a Savior. To deny their guilt, to refute their need, would result in their rejecting their Savior, in whose name alone they could hope to find salvation. No flesh could hope to be justified in the sight of a righteous God for the whole world was guilty before Him.

2. COMMENTARY: (Romans 1:26-27).

Here is stated the moral degradation that follows apostasy from God. Both homosexuality and lesbianism are mentioned here. The increase of these sins and the terrible moral perversion of man today is evidence of mankind's apostasy from the truth of God. Romans 2:5. This speaks of God's anger stored up in heaven against the man whose heart is hard and impenitent. What a tragic stockpile a man can lay aside for himself. Romans 2:14. "By nature" means instinctively. Romans 3:20. The law makes man aware of sin in his nature and character. Man by breaking the law, understands that he is in need of salvation. Only through the broken law can there come the conscienceness of sin.

3. SUMMARY:

All men are proven to be guilty before God. This is done by the revelation of the righteousness of God in the law and by man breaking this law and revealing his own unrighteousness. It should be noted that this has always been the first step towards God: men seeing his own unrighteousness and need for God.

B. RIGHTEOUSNESS PROVIDED BY GOD (Romans 3:21-26):

Since Paul has shown that sin was universal and God's judgment impartial, now Paul declares God's gift of righteousness to be available to all. Man is wholly unable within himself, to become righteous.

The righteousness that Paul writes about here is neither the righteousness of man nor the righteousness of the law but the righteousness of God (verse 22). This righteousness of God is

not righteousness achieved by the keeping of the law and yet the law and the prophets witnessed to it.

In this passage of Scripture, we examine some of the great truths of salvation. Faith, grace, justification, redemption and propitiation are all stated here. Redemption means to buy a slave out of bondage in order to set him free. Man apart from God is in a slavery from which he cannot free himself. He is helplessly under the judgment of God, but God Himself has intervened and paid the price and set him free. The word "propitiation" is the putting away of God's wrath. The wrath of God found adequate judicial satisfaction in the death of Jesus. Sin deserved punishment and death. There can be no reconciliation without judicial satisfaction. Jesus suffered the just penalty for our sins upon Calvary's cross that God might remain just and the one who can fully pardon the guilty sinner. Thus, God provided the righteousness of God for the guilty sinner.

C. RIGHTEOUSNESS RECEIVED BY FAITH (Romans 3:27-31; 4:1-25):

1. EXPOSITION:

In this passage of Scripture, Paul proves that righteousness must be by faith and faith alone that it might be by grace. If the works of the law could receive righteousness, it no longer would be by grace. If it came through works, then man could boast of his goodness and of his accomplishments.

The sin of Satan in the distant past, brought about the need of salvation being provided. What was this original sin? It was the sin of pride. If pride and boasting could re-enter heaven, then all that God had planned and accomplished in providing salvation would be in vain. Boasting and pride must be excluded. The Apostle Paul makes it plain that it is only if salvation is received by faith, that boasting could be excluded. If righteousness came through law or works, then there would be boasting, but if it is by faith alone, then all boasting is excluded.

Righteousness received by faith alone does not nullify the law, but rather the law is confirmed, or made valid. It is confirmed in its role of making men conscience of sin and confronting men with God's only plan for salvation.

The fourth chapter of Romans proves that salvation is by faith alone. There may be many that believe that salvation is by faith, but it must not only be by faith, but it also must be by faith alone.

Two Old Testament characters are used here to prove this great truth. Abraham is one of the greatest saints of the Old Testament. If works could not save Abraham, then nobody could. David was one of the greatest sinners of the Old Testament. If David could be saved by faith, then everyone could. David had broken three of the Ten Commandments. He had coveted, committed adultery and committed murder. What could David do to restore his own innocence? What could David do to restore to Bathsheba her chastity and to Uriah, his life? Nothing. His case was hopeless. David had to look to the promise of God and by simple faith, have righteousness imputed to him.

We also have proven here that salvation is not trusting in the rites of religion. Abraham was a justified man, fourteen years before the rite of circumcision was given. The rite had nothing to do with his redemption at all. It did not confer righteousness; it merely confirmed the righteousness Abraham already had. Since the faith and bestowal of

righteousness occurred before circumcision was a sign of the righteousness imparted to Abraham because of his faith, makes Abraham the father of Jews also. He is the father of those who walk in the faith that he had before he had any external sign.

Finally, justification by faith alone is based upon the creative power of God, and the fact of the resurrection. Abraham knew that he was physically incapable of fathering a child and that his wife, Sarah, was physically incapable of childbearing. However, he weighed the human impossibility of becoming a father against the divine impossibility of God breaking His Word and decided that with God, nothing was impossible.

2. COMMENTARY: (Romans 4:6-7).

The word "impute" simply means to reckon, to credit. When God imputes righteousness, to a man, God simply declares the man righteous and righteousness is credited to him. There is a difference between sins being forgiven and sins being covered, blotted out or remitted. Forgiven sins could be recalled but sins that are blotted out can never be recalled. We might illustrate this way: A man may owe a debt at a store, which he is unable to pay. The storekeeper forgives him. The man now does not have to pay but the account is still on the books. However, a friend comes and pays that debt. No longer can it be on the books and the man is completely free, no longer accountable for any such debt. Romans 4:20 - The word "stagger" means to be at odds with himself, to waver, to doubt. With Abraham there was no uncertainty because of unbelief. Romans 4:25 - The fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ validates the atonement. Because Jesus arose the blood of Jesus Christ has power to cleanse from sin, and we are justified because of the resurrection of Jesus.

3. SUMMARY:

Abraham looked forward by faith to the finished work of Christ for Jesus said to the Jews of His day: *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it and was glad"* (John 8:56). We look back by faith, to the finished work of Christ and enjoy salvation. Two ways are compared and contrasted: salvation by trying, salvation by trusting. What Abraham found, what David found, we must find. Salvation is by faith and by faith alone.

LESSON THREE

SELF HELP TEST

- A. What is man's first step towards God?
- B. Why must pride and boasting be excluded from salvation?
- C. Why are the heathen without excuse?
- D. Why did God give the Gentiles up?
- E. Explain the meaning of Impute:
- F. Explain the meaning of Propitiation:
- G. Why did Paul use Abraham and David as examples in his argument for justification by faith?
- H. Explain how the resurrection of Jesus validates the atonement.