

Part 1: Righteousness – Yours, or God’s

The Righteousness of the Law

Light on the Rock

by Philip Shields

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Abstract: We know we must be righteous, but we must be sure we understand what it is, how we get it, and how **the Bible describes 2 kinds of righteousness**: our own from the law, and the righteousness of God by faith. Without the right kind of saving righteousness, we will not be in the kingdom! Topics: importance of the Law in defining righteousness and its place in our ultimate righteousness. Can obeying the law justify, save us, or make us righteous to inherit God’s kingdom?
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Good day, saints. Welcome to Father’s House, Abba’s house. That’s right, I said “saints”. This is your brother, Philip Shields. I recommend as always you hear the audio – as well as print off a transcript, to study this vital 3 part message.

Our Father calls his children “saints”. The Greek word is *hagios*, meaning holy, consecrated, saint. The first chapter of Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians and others address the church members as *saints*. Anyone who has the indwelling of God’s spirit becomes a child of the Father and a saint – a believer who is considered holy and righteous.

If you say you are not righteous, then you’d better become righteous because only the righteous inherit the kingdom! Sinners and the ungodly will not stand in the judgment (**Ps. 1:5**). The “unrighteous” will not inherit the kingdom (**1 Cor. 6:9**). Thank God though for one thing: **Jesus did not come to call the righteous, but sinners** - like me – to repentance (**Mark 2:17**), **salvation, and a new walk with Him.**

Now on the other hand, if you say you *are* righteous, you and I better be real sure that we have the only kind of righteousness that can give us salvation. You and I may be “righteous” by one definition – and still miss out on the kingdom. Did you know that? So study this carefully.

So today we’re starting a 2 or 3 part series on Righteousness. What it is, why we need it, and insufficient righteousness. I’ve prayed and prayed about this series and am so excited about it. I hope and pray this series will bring you a clarity about salvation, law, righteousness, obedience and the gift of salvation, the gift of righteousness that we can have through Jesus our Lord. So be sure to hear all 2-3 parts, whatever it ends up being.

If you find the material has opened up your understanding, please share it with others.

The Bible speaks of at least 2 kinds of righteousness, and so in this first or 3 messages I will focus on one form of righteousness.

I want to ask you to write down your answer in your notes to a couple quick questions:

- **what is “righteousness”?**
- **how do you become righteous for salvation?**

Now pause the message for 2 minutes and write down your best answer – then turn it back on.

OK – we’re back. Please be turning to Philippians 3. We’ll read about the 2 kinds of righteousness here. In this chapter Paul discusses his surpassing goal – to come to know Christ. Earlier in Phil 3, he talks about “having no confidence in the flesh”. That’s like saying, “I don’t want to trust myself, or my own abilities, or my own physical and natural efforts”. Let’s pick up in Philippians 3:3-11.

In verse 3, he says he was of the true circumcision, spiritually.

V. 4- he says he has a lot of credentials that he could boast with

v. 5-6 he lists his outstanding pedigree and credentials. He WAS one of the true “who’s who” in his day. Let’s start in verse 5.

Philippians 3:5-11

“circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; **concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.** [repeat]

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish,[KJV – dung; *skubalon*] that I may gain Christ 9 **and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;** 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

So there are 2 kinds of righteousness described by Paul:

1. Righteousness of/from our efforts to obey and do the law. This is *our* righteousness.
2. Righteousness of God by faith. This is God’s righteousness.

Paul said he was very familiar with both. In the Righteousness of the Law, he said he was blameless. Blameless. Notice he calls it righteousness – not wickedness. But in verse 8, he said all HIS trophies, all *his* awards, *his* accomplishments, *his* goodness, his bio – all of what *he* was, all of what *he* had done, all of where he was headed – was so much *skubalon*: rubbish, cast-offs, and yes – that word also means “what comes out of a person after they’ve eaten”, says one source. KJV says, “Dung!”

Sometimes I’ve been asked **why we don’t have an “about us” page on our website**. The answer is very simple: **it’s not about us!** I want everyone to understand that **King Jesus** is the Light, and **King Jesus** is the Rock. Light on the Rock is about Jesus, **His** Salvation and how **He** leads us to Abba, our dear Father and how **HE** was perfectly righteous. Besides, **I have no spiritual credentials to boast about** – except as Paul said, he wanted to boast only, or glory only, in Christ and Him crucified for us (**1 Cor. 1:31; 2:2; Gal. 6:14**). If I say too much about me – I’m only describing so much “dung” anyway. Ha! Who wants that?! Some seem to really glory in their dung: the “trophies”, degrees, background and accomplishments of the men leading the group. I want no such trophies except one: Jesus and Him crucified, for me and you, to *His* glory and honor.

Verse 9 –read it again: “be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith”.

He calls very clearly here, his “righteousness from the law” as righteousness that was his own righteousness. He didn’t want that kind of self-improvement project, do-it-yourself project, any

longer. He wanted another kind of righteousness – not one from our own hard efforts, but righteousness that comes by FAITH in/of Christ – “the **righteousness which is from God by faith**”.

So right here Paul defines the 2 kinds of righteousness:

1. Righteousness we can have by working hard to obey all God’s laws
2. righteousness we can have by trusting Jesus, and in faith receiving “the **righteousness which is from God by faith**” – and which we’ll learn in part 2 can be given to us as a gift, “imputed” to us. Be sure to hear part 2 and 3!

There is a righteousness of the law.

Avoiding the Ditches of Righteousness

I’ve concluded that an awful lot of Christians seem to be in one ditch or another on this. But let’s try to avoid the ditches on this topic! **The problem with ditches is this: it keeps you off the road, off of what Paul and others call “The Way”.** Others of you are in a rut. A rut is nothing more than a grave with the ends kicked out. Let’s get out of the ruts of our thinking and get on to the Way!

One ditch is a ditch of legalism and our own efforts to be righteous – which Paul said he wanted to “ditch”, pardon the pun. This ditch results in a judgmental attitude to those who aren’t trying as hard or who think they don’t have to do anything at all. Some in this group even still try to teach that we must keep every ordinance and statute in the Old covenant. We’ll discuss it. Those in this group would rarely claim their favorite book is Galatians or Romans.

The other ditch are so many who want the righteousness by faith but who conclude we don’t have to worry at all if we sin, fall short – and they can easily turn God’s amazing grace into license. Paul, Peter, James, John and so many warned against that over and over. Those in this 2nd ditch feel once they have been sealed by God’s spirit, that there is no way on heaven or earth to really fall away. We’ll talk at length about that in part 3. Those in this group seldom read from Jude or James.

Let’s try to use all the scriptures, the whole counsel of God – instead of just the ones taken out of context that seem to prove our “ditch” is better.

Can man be righteous?

But first today, let’s be sure we understand clearly that the Bible does teach we must be righteous and can be righteous. Many of you are thinking of what Jesus said in **Matthew 19:17-18** – that no one is righteous except God. Paul – in Romans 3 – quotes **Psalm 14:1-3** to say in *God’s* eyes, there is “none righteous, no, not one”, certainly by God’s holy, righteous standards.

And yet so many verses also say that **unless we’re righteousness, we will not enter the kingdom of God (Matt. 25:46)**. The UNrighteous will not enter the kingdom (**1 Cor. 6:9**).

And I’ll take it up a notch to this question: If you are righteous – is it your own righteousness from trying your best to obey God’s law, or do you have God’s righteousness? Or do you hear, or see, any *difference* between the two? I challenge you to really ponder this, because getting the right answer – and *being* the right answer – will affect your eternity!

Now how about this? The head of the Body of Christ – Jesus Christ – is righteous. His church comprises the other parts of HIS body, as I’ve often spoken about recently. **Now is it possible that Jesus, the Head, is righteous but His body – that’s us - be wicked?** I need you to really ponder that. A corollary to that: God as head of His family is righteous. Will holy righteous God have a family composed of children who are anything other than righteous like He is? But is that possible? Can the children of God ever be righteous, coming from flesh and blood humanity?

Now where do you and I stand? Are we righteous -- or are we evil? We’re one or the other. The Bible will not contradict itself. No one’s righteous – but then again so many are called “righteous”, or “holy” or “good” in the Bible. I’ll rattle off a few quick ones. My transcript will have all the scriptures if you want all that. But I want you to get the point: mankind must be seen as righteous or we have no future.

For example:

- Jesus teaches that we should be seekers of *HIS, God’s, righteousness* (Matthew 6:33). “Seek you first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness, and ALL these things [we seek after] shall be added unto you.” If we cannot ever be righteous, why seek it?
- Others called righteous – righteous Abel (Matthew 23:35); Righteous Lot (2 Pet. 2:7). God says to **Noah**, “I have seen that *you are righteous*” – **Genesis 7:1**. Abraham challenged God not to destroy in Sodom “the **righteous** with the wicked” (**Gen. 18:23-26**). **JOB** is defined in **Job 1:1,8** as “upright, blameless, one who feared God and shunned evil”. **Luke 1:6** tells us **the parents of John the baptizer** were both “*righteous before God*, walking in all the commandments of the Lord, blameless.” Barnabas is called “a good man”. And on and on.

So, it’s obvious some people are considered righteous somehow even though by God’s standards, “there is none righteous, no not one.”

WHERE DOES GOD’S LAW FIT INTO THIS CONCEPT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Where does God’s law fit into this concept? Some in Ditch 2 will scream “never! it’s done away!”. But like I said, we’re going to get the whole counsel of God and His word on this subject.

Psalms 119:172.

“My tongue shall speak of Your word, **For all Your commandments are righteousness.**”

No wonder God inspired **Psalm 1:1-3** which tells us to meditate on God’s law day and night, and we will produce fruit in due season. It is a perfect law, producing good fruit. But as we’ll see - - *God’s law can’t justify us for past offences or make us righteous after we’ve incurred the law’s penalty.*

Now let’s read Isaiah 51:7:

“Listen to Me, you who know righteousness, You people in whose heart is My law:
Do not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their insults.”

In the Old Covenant, someone who kept God’s law (for the most part) was considered a righteous person. If the nation as a whole kept God’s law, it was considered a righteous nation, and **God promised in Deut. 28 and Lev. 26 to bless the people when they obeyed, and to curse them**

when they disobeyed. Many of you are familiar with those chapters, called “the Blessings and Cursings chapters”. So there is a strong blessing for obeying what God says.

Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15

"Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. 2 **And all these blessings shall come upon you** and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God....."

Verse 15 says if you don’t keep His law – He will bring curses.

God wanted His law in their hearts, even in the Old Testament. After Israel was told in Deut 6:5 to love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul and strength, God continues in **Deut 6:6** to say, **“These words I command you shall be in your heart”**.

But Israel failed to keep God’s law. The problem was not with the law, which Paul describes as “holy, just and good” (**Rom 7:12**) – but the problem was *with the people* (**Hebrews 8:7**) – **and that includes us people, who could not and cannot keep God’s holy, perfect law perfectly. Paul makes that conclusion when he says in Rom 8:7 that the carnal or natural mind cannot obey God. Don’t forget: Paul even called himself “carnal” – in Rom 7:14—“I am carnal” and admitted throughout Rom 7 that even HE kept flubbing up, doing what he hated, not doing what he wanted to do (Rom 7:15-16). Get this: even with God’s spirit!!**

But bear in mind, God’s law is righteousness. Paul said, even by his sinning, he declared the law is good (**Rom 7:16**). We’ve read that several times now. And this is also where people begin to believe they must be perfect obeyers of that law *themselves*, somehow. So back to **Deut. 6:24-25**.

Deuteronomy 6:24-25 and let’s read it carefully:

“And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. 25 **Then it will be righteousness for us, IF we are careful to observe ALL these commandments** before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.’

So there are definite blessings for doing what God says to do.

Were they able to do it? Did anyone perfectly keep “ALL these commandments”, all the time? Did King David? Abraham? Anyone? Or has not everyone failed to one degree or another?

Can trying to obey God’s law – and failing, as we all have -- give you eternal life?

So what does the Law do? What is its purpose?

Paul tells us in so many verses that the purpose of the Law was to identify what sin is. He would not have known sin, except for the law that said, “Don’t do this, or do that” (**Romans 7:7**). He would not have known it was wrong to **covet**, unless the law told him not to covet. He goes on to say that the law – because he broke it so often – produced the death penalty in him.

In fact, one of the definitions of sin is given so clearly in 1 John 3:4 – “Sin is the transgression of the law” KJV. Every time we break God’s law, we’re sinning. It’s that simple.

“The law” means the “Torah” – anything especially in the first 5 books of the Bible. Sin must include breaking the 10 commandments. **Sin is lawlessness.** Remember David has already said, **“All thy commandments are righteousness” (Ps. 119:172).** John goes on to say, **“ALL unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17a).**

So it’s clear – breaking God’s law, which is righteousness, is sin. Sin makes us UNrighteous.

Therefore God’s law – besides defining sin – also defines righteousness. And since God is righteous, His law also defines His way of life, His way of thinking, the way of His Kingdom. God is His law, for He is a perfectly just God. **God is also LOVE,** we’re told over and over.

The first 4 commands tell us how to love God: have no other gods but the one living God, have no idols nor bow down to any idols, we’re told to honor His name and don’t take it in vain, and we’re told to obey His command to rest on the 7th day of each week – not just any day, not just 1 in 7, but specifically the 7th. That’s how we love God.

God’s law, the last 6 commands, also teach us how to love our neighbor. How? We start with a strong, cohesive family where mother and father are honored and obeyed. We don’t kill people – we don’t even hate people. We must honor the bond between a man and his sweetheart wife – and never even think of bedding the spouse of another; God help us who have failed in this! We must never, ever steal, lie or even want what belongs to another. Instead we learn to share, to have our word always be truth, and learn to be content with what we have. That’s the last 6 commands in a nutshell. How can that be a bad thing? It isn’t! God’s law is good. It would be WONDERFUL if the whole world would honor and obey all 10 commands of God.

Paul – in referring to “the Law” clearly means the 10 commandments as you see in Romans 13:8-10:

Romans 13:8-10

“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for **he who loves another has fulfilled the law.** 9 For the **commandments**, “You shall not commit **adultery**,” “You shall not **murder**,” “You shall not **steal**,” “You shall not bear **false witness**,” “You shall not **covet**,” and if there is any other **commandment**, **are all summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”** 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore **love is the fulfillment of the law.**”

That’s what Jesus also said in **Mark 12:28-31**: the 2 greatest commands are to love God and man.

Turn now to 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Paul makes it clear that “the unrighteous” will not inherit the kingdom of God. Lawbreakers, people who are commandment breakers as their way of life, will not be in God’s kingdom. Otherwise, what do you do with this passage we’re about to read?

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither **fornicators**, nor **idolaters**, nor **adulterers**, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor **thieves**, nor **covetous**, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 *And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*”

So righteousness is keeping the law – but can you?-- and sin is breaking the law. Those are scriptures we cannot just throw out, regardless of what you might think of the Law – pro or con. Those verses are there. They’re for real and I’m going to preach them. When John speaks of “sin is the transgression of the law” in **1 John 3:4**, we know that is the 10 commandments. When Paul speaks of “the law” in Romans and Galatians, he still means the same thing. He makes that very clear because in **Romans 2:17-24**, he specifically speaks of stealing, adultery and having idols. And in **Romans 7:7**, in context of the “law” once again, he brings up “thou shalt not covet”. That is the 10th commandment. **Rom 13:8-10** also clearly equates “the law” with the 10 commandments.

Since God’s law – including His 10 commandments – tell us how to love God and man, how can God’s law be bad? It isn’t. Don’t ever preach that you can just go and break God’s law and don’t ever preach against God’s law, or you’ll be called the “least” by those in the kingdom of Heaven (**Matthew 5:19**). That’s what Jesus said!

So don’t accept explanations of Romans and Galatians that start with the premise that when Paul speaks of “the law” in those books, somehow he is restricting himself to just circumcision or the ceremonial laws.

There’s a better explanation and understanding, which we’re coming to! **We can’t pick and choose when we want “the law” to mean the 10 commandments (as in 1 John 3:4) and then when we decide it doesn’t fit our theology** – so we say Paul means circumcision, or the ceremonial law of washings, sacrifices, the priesthood and so on. No, brethren! “The Law” is the first 5 books. And it must include the 10 commandments. That’s why Paul said he would not have known not to covet had “the law” not said it was wrong to covet (Rom. 7:7; also Rom. 13:8-10)

Now I hasten to add, please don’t assume I’m going to say we can just throw out the 10 commandments! *Oh no! And neither does Paul.* Paul says over and over basically, “don’t think I’m saying the law is nullified! No, I establish the law” – **Rom 3:31; 7:12; Rom 7:22**—“I delight in the law”; **Rom. 7:25** – “with my mind I serve the law of God”. ALL of Romans 6 is about how we now have become slaves of righteousness. Romans 6 is about how we can’t continue in sin, so grace can abound (**Rom 6:1-2**) and how we are *not* to present ourselves as instruments of sin, but of righteousness (**Rom 6:12-13**). Paul also explains in Romans 6 that we are under grace, not under law (**Romans 6:14**).

This is where some people jump into one of the 2 ditches, of either legalism or license, thinking it’s totally one or the other. Keep listening for the explanation of how we become truly righteous, even though we can’t keep God’s law at all perfectly.

WHAT do we have so far in regards to God’s LAW?

- they’re GOD’S law, defining how He lives and who and what He is
- they show us how to love God and man
- Jesus magnified the law – lust now is included in adultery, for example (Matt. 5:27-28)
- the law of God is holy, just and good and all His commands are righteousness
- those who live a way of life of breaking God’s way, His law – or who don’t love God and people – will *not* be in God’s kingdom.
- Those who break or teach against God’s law will be called “least” in the kingdom
- Paul said even *he* could not keep God’s law, but kept breaking it, even with God’s spirit

The purpose of God’s law, so far:

- Define God and His love and the way to live
- Define “sin” as the way that breaks His law; define righteousness as keeping the law

Jesus made it clear to everyone – and to us – **that the law of God was not passing.**

Matthew 5:17-20

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. *I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.* 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that ***unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.***"

Did you hear that last bit? You and I have no chance of entering the kingdom of Heaven unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees – who sought to be blameless in the law. Remember, Paul said that as far as “the righteousness of the law” went, he was blameless – but realized even being blameless, was not enough. I’m going to explain all that. Bear with me.

Since the law is righteousness, if anyone could do the whole law, he would be justified – considered righteous, made right in God’s eyes.

But can **YOU** keep the law of God perfectly enough to make yourself righteous? Keep that question in mind! **Let’s look at the Law of God, and begin to explain – with that background of the holiness and perfection of God’s law – what appears to be a contradiction.**

Romans 2:12-13

“For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law 13(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but **the doers of the law will be justified;**”

That last verse says you will be made just, justified, made right with God, by being a doer of the law. Some of you “in Ditch 2” are freaking out right now – but hey, you’ve got to all face that verse. It’s there! How do you explain it? Bear with me.

Bear in mind, however, that Paul and James and others make it clear, if you’re going to go down that path, you must keep every single command, perfectly, all the time.

Deuteronomy 27:26

26'Cursed is the one who does not confirm ALL the words of this law.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'"

James 2:10-11

"For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. 11 For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law."

Paul was making the same point in regard to circumcision. Some in Galatia were believing they had to do the law themselves, perfectly, to be saved, including circumcision. Here’s what he says:

Galatians 5:3 “And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.”

But then how do we explain Romans 2:13 – the doers of the law will be justified? **

Can KEEPING GOD’S LAW SAVE YOU?

God’s law defines Love and defines God’s way of life that loves one another.

Has anyone kept it perfectly? Remember we’re told over and over that if we want to have eternal life by obedience to law, we must keep every single law, every single second, of our life without a single failure. Not one failure is allowed.

If and when we sin, one time, the law is just – and demands justice be done! You’ve broken the law and the penalty for that is death. No amount of law-keeping after that can remove the demand for your blood, because you broke it one time. (Hmmm.... Except most of us break God’s law in one way or another probably just about every day!).

Let’s let God’s word speak to us – and I hope and pray that this 3 part sermon on Righteousness will bring a clarity to you deeper than you’ve had before. I know preparing this certainly has given me an exciting clarity I know I lacked before:

Romans 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”.

What we’ve earned is death? Why? Because we’ve all “sinned and come short of the glory of God” (**Romans 3:23**). That verse comes after the long passage about there being not one righteous, no not one.

This same Paul, inspired by the same God who is the real author of the book of Romans, soon writes this, however

Romans 3:20 “Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin”

Then in v. 28:

“Therefore we conclude that **a man is justified by faith *apart from* the deeds of the law.**”

BACK TO **ROMANS 2:13** – “The doers of the law will be justified”.

How do we explain that apparent contradiction?

If a human being could perfectly obey a perfectly righteous law, from his or her birth, to their last breath, *without a single flaw*, that person would be deemed godly righteous. But for you or me – listen carefully – to be judged a perfect “doer of the law” we would have to keep the law perfectly, every moment of our lives. And, understand this, if we had ever one time come short of

God’s perfection expressed by His law, we cannot be said to have done the law or to have been a “doer of the law”.

Here are some more clear verses about how – since we have not been able to keep the Law of GOD perfectly, we are not righteous enough for salvation. **Since we’ve broken God’s perfect law, it demands justice – and cannot justify us after breaking it.** It cannot make us righteous. It can only demand its penalty. It can only demand our death after we’ve broken it.

Galatians 2:15-16

“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, 16 knowing that **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.**”

Galatians 2:21 (people love verse 20, but often don’t read v. 21)

“I do not set aside the grace of God; for **if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.**”

Galatians 3:10-12

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in **ALL** things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” 11 **But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God** is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.”

Galatians 3:21

“Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For **if there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.**”

So Paul ends up telling us in **Hebrew 7:19**: “for *the law made nothing perfect...*”

Our own righteousness – measured against God’s holiness – always falls way short. No wonder **God** says this about all **our** own righteousness in **Isaiah 64:6**, especially when compared to His perfect holiness:

“But we are all like an unclean thing, And **all OUR righteousnesses are like filthy rags...**”

The Hebrew there for “filthy” is also translated “menstruous”. You think you’re pretty good? Do yah? You think you’re better than me? That’s not hard . . . but in God’s sight, your righteousness and mine... might as well be second hand Tampax! Don’t be offended at my frankness. That’s what the Hebrew can mean!

Isaiah – when faced by God’s holiness – says he was coming unglued! “I am undone!” **Isaiah 6:5**. Are you beginning to see that? Not just in word – but in your heart!? Jacob says at the end of his life, “My days have been few and evil” (**Gen. 47:9**). Compared to perfect righteousness that is God, we are nothing more than menstruous rags, brethren, in spite of our best efforts.

So here’s what we’ve got so far: those who kept God’s law for the most part, in the Old covenant were blessed for as much obedience as they had done. God sent them rain in due

season, gave them victory over their enemies, and so on – but God could not give them everlasting life, since they had all in fact broken it over and over. They had not earned salvation. They had earned death, the first time they broke any of its laws.

But even a “righteous” man, or a “righteous” nation, though appearing to be overall “not so bad” – had in fact fallen short of God’s glory and could not be given eternal life. They could be given physical blessings – but not eternal life.

I hope this will help you understand the book of Job better too. We’ll get to that if we have time.

That also explains why, compared to the holiness and perfection of God, all our own righteousness falls so short, that God calls our righteousness “filthy rags”. The Hebrew word actually means “menstruous” rags. **Isaiah 64:6** “But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousness are like filthy rags...” It falls way short of what God wants to clothe us with!

It doesn’t say all our wickedness is like filthy rags—but our righteousness is like filthy rags. When Paul finally met Jesus, came to be in Christ, he too realized that his blameless conduct in the law came up to just so much rubbish, or the KJV says “dung”! (**Phil. 3:6-8**).

We failed. Many, many times. I know I sure have. With even one failure, we come under the law – under its penalty.

Therefore, since no one has done it except Christ, although the “doers of the law will be justified”, it is just as evident that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight...” (**Romans 3:20**). **God’s law, being a perfect law, cannot justify you once you’ve broken it. There’s no statute of limitations with God’s law. Even perfect obedience going forward, cannot restore what we broke before.** We’re simply doing what is required going forward. But even then, you know - - unless you’re self-righteous – you **and I cannot obey God’s law perfectly day by day even now!**

Remember **Paul’s** words? After saying the law of God is holy, just and good (**Rom 7:12**), he says but he is carnal, sold under sin, and even though he now hated to do wrong, he still found himself doing wrong! “**That which I hate, I do**” (**Romans 7:15**).

Can you say you’re doing any better than Paul? Can you?

If you say you can, there’s no discussion, because you have not yet come to see yourself as a total and complete failure – spiritually bankrupt before God. I know I am. And many others know I am! But praise be to God, there is an answer to all of this. In fact, I believe each of us – listen – has come up short in every single particular of God’s law. It’s impossible for mankind to do even a single act on his or her own power to the measure of God’s righteousness.

Even the Psalmist says “My goodness *extendeth not* to Thee” (**Psalms 16:2**). In NIV, it says, “apart from you, I have no good thing”. Paul says the same thing: “I know, that in my flesh, dwells no good thing” – **Rom. 7:18-20**. Jesus tells us several times what is in our hearts. **Mark 7:21-23** – remember? “For out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts..” – and he lists them, adultery, murders, fornication, pride, foolishness and so on. And he says they defile the man.

So Paul concludes it thus:

Romans 8:6-8 “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 **Because the carnal[natural] mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.** 8 **So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”**

Good deeds proceeding from a sinful heart cannot happen, especially in the long term. JESUS says that an evil heart produces evil, a good man out of a good heart produces good (Luke 6:44-45). We have to CHANGE WHAT WE ARE, before we can be good.

That is why one of my favorite sermons is “Repenting of what we ARE”. The publican went to the temple and knew what he was, “Lord, be merciful on me, a sinner”. And he went away justified. Declared right with God.

In Part 2 of our message, we’ll tackle the answer to the problem we have – that our own good efforts fall short and therefore we’ve only earned the curse of the law: death. And we’ll also see next time why we need to have the God’s righteousness by faith – and HOW we do that.

So I hope you’re seeing that the righteousness of the law falls short – and so Paul says he doesn’t want the righteousness that is the result of what he had done in his attempts to obey God’s perfect law, because it falls short of salvation! It falls short of justification by God. It isn’t good enough.

Paul even went so far as to say, that other people looking at him would say that - - in terms of keeping the physical law – he was “blameless” (**Philippians 3:5-6**). He still called that – “dung”!

Now, I hope you understand better about another man, who also kept the law of God so well, that even GOD said he was “blameless” and a “good man” - - by the letter of the law. **JOB!** But was Job perfect? Had he kept God’s law without a single flaw, really? NO!

And the problem with Job – and the problem with all of us who fall into the “self-improvement” camp, or the “do-it-yourself” camp, is that we start to think we’re pretty good, and we can boast about our accomplishments.

Here’s what happens when we try to be deemed righteous, and saved, by our own obedience to the law of God:

- we think we can ‘feel good’ about how good we are and we can boast about our accomplishments.
- We measure others by one another – instead of by Christ. In fact, this kind of righteousness loves measurements, yardsticks, check-lists something they can look at and feel good about.
- We then look down on others and despise them for not measuring up to our hard work
- When we do invariably fail, we feel so guilty, so terrible, and have no joy
- In the end, we will not be able to earn salvation, because we fail!

The Lesson from the Pharisee and the Publican

Luke 18:9-14 talks about 2 men who went to the temple to pray. You should know the story, but let’s re-read the words carefully. It has everything to do with this message.

Luke 18:9-14

“Also He spoke this parable to **some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others**: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am **not like other men** [instead of measuring himself by GOD, he compares himself to the obvious sinners]-- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ['I'm so righteous because of all things I don't do] 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' 13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be **merciful** to me a sinner!' 14 I tell you, **this man went down to his house justified** rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Don't we ALL want to be justified – made right, made righteous – with God? Jesus gives us the transition to the next message right here: your righteousness won't and can't justify you! If you want to be made righteous – you have to first have your sins removed and then be GIFTED with righteousness, which we'll go into fully next time. He says, the better way is to ask for mercy, and you will go home justified!

This is basically what JOB had to also learn. He had human righteousness. He obeyed God pretty well, compared to most folks. He was a good man. But it was JOB'S righteousness, not God's. Since it was Job's righteousness, he could boast about it – and did (Job 29-31)! Let's read some selected verses to see what had to happen to Job and what has to happen to each of us!

When we understand with Paul, that his perfect blameless keeping of the law (**Phil. 3:6**) was just so much dung (**v.8**), and with Isaiah that all our righteousness is just so much repulsive, menstuous rags (**Isaiah 64:6**), we can now better understand Job.

THE LESSON FROM JOB

This was the fundamental difference JOB had to come to see. Humanly speaking, like all men, he obviously had sinned. But later in life, his life was- by human standards - perfection. He had a lot of human righteousness from the law. Like Paul in Phil. 3:6, he would be considered “blameless”. God himself said so (**Job 1:1,8**). Some of you believe Job had the right kind of righteousness because God called him blameless. But Paul said he was blameless too, according to the law, but considered all that just so much dung! Isaiah understood our righteousness to be menstuous rags.

If JOB had been truly righteous after a godly sort, why did he feel he had to repent and come to abhor himself? Read **Job 42:6**. Why would he – when repenting – say, “**Behold I am vile**” (**Job 40:4**). That would have been a lie if he had been righteous in a Godly righteous way.

Here are some verses that point up to the way Job saw himself before he repented in Job 40 and 42. I hope you'll see his self-righteousness. I hope you'll see his human righteousness from the law – but not righteousness by faith in God, as Abram, as Noah, as Abel had. And as a result, we find Job boasting about His own goodness over and over. Job 29-31 will show you that.

Job 27:6 “**MY righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go**; My heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.” Hmm. There's nothing here about God's righteousness.

Job 29:14 “**I put on righteousness**, and it clothed me; **My justice** was like a robe and a turban.”

Do you hear anything about God’s righteousness? Not one word. He didn’t need God’s righteousness. His self-efforts were just fine, he thought. ELIHU was the one who got it right. God did not condemn him. Notice what he says to Job:

Job 34:5-6

"For Job has said, '**I am righteous**, but God has taken away my justice;
6 Should I lie concerning my right? My wound is incurable, **though I am without transgression.**'
[Brethren, no man should ever say that. John tells us in 1 John 1:10 that he who says he is without sin is a liar! Our righteousness must be from what JESUS is doing in our lives.]

Job 35:1-2 this one’s incredible!

“Moreover Elihu answered and said: 2 ‘Do you think this is right? Do *you* say, '**My righteousness is more than God's**'?” [WOW! Brethren, that’s incredible that any man can think or say that!]

Job 36:1-3 “Elihu also proceeded and said: 2 ‘Bear with me a little, and I will show you that there are yet words to speak on God's behalf. 3 I will fetch my knowledge from afar; **I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.**” Elihu got the picture!

And then Elihu urges Job to see the works of God, and not just his own works (Job 36-37). The lesson is there for us: see God’s doings in your life – and not just your own accomplishments.

The greatest of all works of God is that He sent Jesus Christ for us and God can somehow open our stubborn minds to see that, beg for that sacrifice to be applied to us, and to let God transform us! The greatest creation of God is the new creation He has been performing in His children! GOD must be the creator of the new you – not you yourself!

When Job repented, what did he say? “I heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but **now my eye sees YOU**”....He’s saying, my poor paraphrase of it: “God, I’m focusing on you now, on your works, on your power, on your righteousness. I just didn’t get it before! Now I do, and in your holy presence, I abhor myself, I am vile, and I repent in sackcloth and ashes” (**Job 40:4; 42:6**).

I think many of us are like Job. We feel good about ourselves if we can *measure* our righteousness, and feel like we’re somehow righteous, because we wear a white shirt at church, or by the amount of makeup – or not – on our women’s faces, or if we pray for 31 minutes instead of just 10, or if start the sabbath a little earlier than sundown, and on and on – and we miss the point, that all of that is the physical righteousness of the Pharisees and is so much dung, if we’re counting on that to save us. And Jesus said our righteousness has to *surpass* the righteousness of the Pharisees (**Matthew 5:20**). He meant, we have to go beyond the physical measurements to get to the core of what God is all about: believing in Jesus, loving one another, accepting one another without condemnation, and showing justice, mercy and faith to one another.

Human righteousness majors in the minors. Human righteousness likes measurements and feeling good that you’ve attended so many feasts now (you know exactly how many years, don’t you?), and never missed a sabbath service, and they like comparisons. They like numbers - - how much was the offering per person, how long did the person pray, how much did we grow in

attendance this year. . . that’s all the wrong focus. That’s being a Job: looking on what we are doing and not on what God is doing.

God looks upon your heart. God looks at how much we’ve grown in faith and love - - not just in numerical attendance! God looks on how we treat the most despised, the poor, the lowly, and the people who know they are scumballs but have changed and repented? Do you rejoice with them and accept them in your fellowship – or tell them to never, ever, come into your fellowships, for they just might be an embarrassment to you? God’s righteousness ascribes righteousness to Him.

As usual, I preach to myself. I’ve had a lot of repenting to do as I prepared this message. I too have been too focused on majoring in the minors in years gone by: with my church, with my family, with myself. Well – I hope I’m growing up in the Lord, finally. About time. Pray for me, as I pray for you, that we ALL understand we cannot save ourselves. Even Philippians 2:11 is followed by verse 12 that says it is GOD who works in us both to want to do and to actually do.

Brethren, what I’ve been saying, and what Paul has said, is this:

- trying to be righteous by obeying the law: we’ve failed and will continue to fail, *even with God’s spirit.*
- because we’ve fallen short, our righteousness won’t be good enough, ever.
- We will never become righteous enough, no matter how hard we try

Let’s end with what we started with: **Philippians 3:9-11** – “**and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;** 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Brethren there is tremendous hope. I wish I didn’t have to stop here – because we’re just getting to the exciting part now. So – you must not miss part 2.

Next 2 sermons – I can hardly wait. #2 is going to be thrilling and exciting, I promise!

- how do we become righteous if we keep failing?
- We’ll explain the exciting gift that is rarely –if ever - spoken about in some churches
- We’ll get into this amazing truth of “**imputed** righteousness”
- God’s righteousness and keeping the Law after we have accepted Jesus
- The JOY of Salvation we can experience when we finally understand this teaching

We’ve barely scratched the surface. So be sure to be praying about this. Homework for next time: **Please study Romans 2, 3, 4, 5 and Galatians 2, 3, 4** carefully and slowly – just you and God’s word. No commentaries, no sermons - -just the words of God. And re-read Phil. **3:8-10, 2 Cor. 5:20-21; 1 John 2 and 3, James 2.**

Again, if you don’t ever download and listen to the audio messages, I recommend you do. There will be things in the audio not in the transcript. I don’t have any staff or help – and since I must work for a living, the transcripts are just close approximations of what gets said.

To God be all the glory, praise and honor. It is in what GOD is doing that we boast. Until next time, my brothers and sisters in Jesus, this is Philip Shields.

