

God Had a Son before Mary Did

Chapter Five, The Righteousness of God Part 2

“THE STRENGTH OF SIN”

- The law of Moses not only made the greatest human righteousness possible, but it also made possible the greatest human wickedness.
- The law was holy and good, but man’s sinful nature is “more deceitful than anything,” and it used that holy and good thing to commit worse sins than were possible without it.
- Moses’ law taught man what was right, but he could not escape the crafty dominion of sin that overpowered his will to do good.
- Sin is so ingrained in human nature that even when people followed the law, they could still find themselves opposing God and hating those who were like Him.
- When Paul was persecuting God’s people, he was blameless according to the righteousness of the law.
- One of Paul’s themes throughout his letters is that he and his fellow Jews were by nature no better than the Gentiles.

A RESPECTABLE KIND OF WICKEDNESS

- No one, Jew or Gentile, can justly boast of being good..
- Though blameless in the righteousness of the law, young Paul discovered that he had become an enemy of those who were blameless in the righteousness of God.
- Young Paul’s respectable kind of wickedness was the same wickedness that motivated the elders of Israel to persecute and kill Jesus.
- The proud leaders of Israel condemned those who did not know and keep the law, but it was they, not drunkards, harlots, or other social outcasts who despised the Son of God.
- It was keeping the law which gave Israel’s elders the proud strength the needed in order to commit the gravest wickedness.
- The elders who meticulously kept the law were trapped in a sinfulness that was so sinful they did not even recognize it as sin.
- The elders’ great pride in being ceremonially correct brought them more fully under sin’s dominion every time they obeyed one of God’s commandments.

“THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT OF LIFE”

- The law was powerless, not because it was wrong, but because it had no power to change human nature and make it holy.

AN EVEN GREATER RIGHTEOUSNESS OR WICKEDNESS

- The law of Moses empowered Israel to be far more righteous or wicked than the Gentiles, and the Spirit empowers God's children to "far exceed" all human righteousness or wickedness.
- The sin of those who receive the Spirit and then become proud of it is worse than the sin which the law made possible.
- The sin of believers who are in Christ but not like Christ is far greater than the sin of Jews who were under Moses' law but were not like Moses.
- God's people in this New Covenant are capable of a degree of wickedness that was not possible for those under the Old Covenant, just as they are capable of a greater righteousness.
- The importance of loving the truth of Christ is that loving it will keep us in the greater righteousness and save us from falling into the greater transgression.

BROKENHEARTED AND OUTRAGED

- God used Paul's humbling experience with the craftiness of human nature to teach him that everyone without God's kind of life is helplessly trapped in sin.
- The holy law that God gave to Israel provided no escape from sinfulness.
- After God shared His kind of life with Paul, Paul could see what sin had done to him.
- When Paul's Gentile converts were persuaded to add ceremonies to their faith, Paul was both heartbroken and outraged.
- The ceremonies of Moses' law were given by God as an imitation of His life until His Son came and did what needed to be done for the real thing to be given.
- The law's holy imitations were always intended to be discarded after the Spirit came, and Paul was the first man to understand that.

THE LOST GOSPEL OF PAUL

- The revelation given to Paul was that the law was intended only for the nation of Israel.
- Neither God nor His Son have ever conducted a ceremony.
- By adding ceremonies to their faith, Gentile believers were denying the finished work of Christ and had "fallen from grace".
- What is the point of serving God the way Jews under the law did, if observing the law's rites and rules never delivered them from the dominion of sin?
- Most Gentile believers were eventually persuaded to follow the law-keeping example of Jesus and his disciples.
- Jesus lived under the law so we would not have to.
- Living in God's righteousness is the best thanksgiving we can offer Him for His grace.
- Walking in the Spirit which Jesus purchased for us is the only way now to please God.
- Almost everyone Paul ever led to Christ rejected his gospel of liberty from rites and rules.

NO WORKS OF ANY LAW

- No law, that is, no set of rites and rules, can justify sinners before God. Only faith in Christ Jesus can do it.

- Human nature's addiction to ceremonial form resists Paul's revelation that walking in the Spirit is all that humans need to do, or can do, to please God.
- Our fleshly nature demands rites and rules so that it can boast in itself, but that demand is completely contrary to the righteousness of God.

MOSES' LAW WAS NOT FOR DEAD PEOPLE

- When someone who lived under the law died, he was no longer required to keep the law.
- Moses' law applied only to living people; no dead man was ever commanded to be circumcised, make sacrifices, or keep the Sabbath.

"OUT OF HIS MIND"

- God's children are dead with Christ to religious rites and rules, but are entirely new creatures who are not dependent upon such carnal things for their hope.
- The resurrected Lord Jesus, sitting now at God's right hand, ministers to all mankind through the Spirit, not through the law and the elements of the world it used.

JEW AND GENTILE ALIKE

- With an ever-growing number of ministers declaring Paul's doctrine to be wrong, it was very difficult for Paul to establish his Gentile converts in his gospel of liberty.
- Paul himself, being a circumcised man, was obligated to observe the law.
- Paul's doctrine was not well understood by believing Jews, and was not accepted at all by non-believing ones.

BASIC ELEMENTS

- Paul's gospel is repugnant to those who will not humble themselves to the invisible righteousness of God because they cannot make an impressive show of that kind of righteousness.
- For souls who are hungering and thirsting for true life, Paul's gospel is incomparably simple and sweet.
- Christ Jesus lived in the flesh under the law of Moses, and when his flesh died, the law that his flesh had kept died with it.
- Whoever is in Christ is dead with Christ.
- Moses' law never applied to dead people.
- Rites and rules do not apply to those who are dead with Christ. They are free to live according to their new nature.

"BECAUSE OF THE PROPHETS"

- The law was intended to lead Israel to that righteousness, but they didn't understand it, and in the end, the law that should have led them to that blessing became their prison.
- Great benefits came to Israel by keeping Moses' law, (Rom. 9:4-5), and tragic events always befell the nation when Israel's leaders led them away from it.

- The Bible is replete with stories of God's people following their leaders into evil, sometimes great evil, thinking that they were doing good.
- God's servants have most often been rejected because of the influence of ministers who claim to speak for God but have not been sent by Him to do so.

GOD'S LOVE FOR THE JEWS

- The born-again Jews who were still dedicated to Moses' law in Paul's day were not being rebellious, for God's will at that time was for Jewish believers to continue in the law.
- There was a loving purpose for the law to remain in effect for a time after the Spirit came.
- The Son of God had no need of the law's rites and rules because he was created with God's kind of life, but he did not live for himself any more than he died from himself.
- God's love compelled Jesus to live in a way which God's people could respect, which was to bind himself with them under the law, even as he was making a way for them to escape it.
- Though Jesus kept the law for the sake of his beloved fellow Jews, many of them cursed him, considering him insane, and even accused him of being demon-possessed.
- It is the Spirit alone, without Moses' law, which makes souls righteous.
- God's life, the holy Spirit, sets souls free even from the rites and rules that God Himself had commanded in Israel.
- Walking with Jesus and observing the law with him had made his disciples doubly sure that God would always require them to keep the law.
- Paul's doctrine was clearly contrary to the way the Son of God himself lived while on earth.
- To make the way for mankind to enjoy the same liberty from rites and rules that he and God had enjoyed since before creation was the Son's very purpose for coming.

"CONTINUAL SORROW"

- Jesus' disciples were already righteous by the law's standard when Jesus told them that they must seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

BEYOND MAN'S WILDEST DREAMS

- To partake of God's kind of righteousness was beyond the wildest dreams of all people; nobody ever even prayed for it because nobody knew such a righteousness existed.
- The disciples were familiar with prophecies of a day when the law's kind of righteousness would end, but they did not realize it would be God's kind of righteousness that would end it.
- The liberty which Paul preached was liberty from ignorance and spiritual weakness. It was the liberty to know God's will and be able to do it.
- God cannot use you as long as you are living by a set of rules.
- The liberty that God's life brings is as joyous to the souls who enter into it as it is strange and frightening to the souls who will not.
- The Son of God came to set us free from our fear of breaking a rule and being damned, and he accomplished that purpose by recreating us as people to whom rules and rites do not apply.