

## Our Righteousness – Deuteronomy 6:25

### I. INTRODUCTION – Read 6:20-25

#### A. *The Debates*

1. During the recent Presidential debates, a *lot* of statistics were quoted by each of the candidates in support of their positions.
2. Most of us who listened had no idea if those statistics were accurate.
3. In an attempt to poke holes in the other candidate's argument, each side has referred to *FactCheck.org* -
  - a. a website that takes an unbiased & non-partisan look at the *claims* of the Candidates.
  - b. it turns out *both* sides bend the truth.
  - c. *both* candidates skew the figures in their direction, using questionable figures & accounting methods in order to bolster their position.
4. It's interesting listening to the candidates debate – they're both so certain they're *right*.
5. And not only they, but those who *support* them.
  - a. political discussion often becomes heated because people have such firm opinions, convinced they are *right* & the other person is wrong.
  - b. it's been said that there are *two things* it's not polite to bring up in public discussion – Politics & Religion.
  - d. people have such *strong views*, so convinced of the *rightness* of their beliefs that the discussion of such things can quickly lead to intense argument.

#### B. *Being Right*

1. In *political* debate, both sides cannot be right at the same time when they differ so fundamentally.
2. It's possible that *neither* side is right – they may *both* be wrong.
3. The same is true in *religious* discussions. Contrary to a lot of modern thinking, all paths *do not, cannot* lead to God.
4. They can't because they all believe something *different*, so they cannot *all* be true.

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5. I hope we all agree that *far more important* than having a position on the *political* issues of the day, we would all have a settled & confident position regarding our *religious beliefs*.
  - a. as important as *politics* is, it only deals with the *hear & now*.
  - b. our *religion* deals with *eternity*.
6. *Some* people expend great effort to make sure their *political* opinions are *right*, but they don't show *nearly* as much interest in making sure they're right in their *religious* beliefs.
7. There's one concern that ought to outweigh all others – and that is this: To be able to answer the question,

“How can I be *right* with God?”

- a. how can a person know that they stand in God's favor & not under His judgment?

- b. how can they be confident that when this life is over, they're accepted and not condemned before the Heavenly Judge?
- 8. The answer to that most important of all questions is what we're considering today.

## II. TEXT

### A. *Setting The Scene*

1. AS we come to our text, 40 years have passed since the Exodus from Egypt & Israel is on the eastern side of the Jordan River preparing to cross over & begin their conquest of Canaan.
2. Since this is a *different* generation than the one that left Egypt, part of their preparation was Moses' recounting their history & the Law God had given them as part of their covenant with Him.
3. God & Israel had entered a solemn pact:
  - a. *God's side* of the agreement was to *bless & protect* them.
  - b. *Israel's side* was to *obey* God's Law.
  - c. if the people walked in obedience, then they would be right with God & would enjoy His favor & abundance.
4. In these verses, Moses reminds them this is the *enduring* covenant they're in with God, so they must be careful to *educate their children* so future generations can enjoy it too.

### B. *Their Righteousness*

1. What I want to focus on today is v. 25.
2. Moses says . . .  
**"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."**
2. American's *love slang* and it seems we are forever inventing new ways of saying things.
3. Surfers have their own unique vocabulary & many of their words have now entered common usage; stoked, knarley, dude, whoa.
4. In the 60's, the hippies supplied dozens of new idioms to our everyday speech.
  - a. one of them my friends used a lot when we were teens was the word "righteous!"
  - b. "Man, that's *righteous!*" by which we meant it was really good.
5. You don't hear that word much anymore. It's pretty much passed from the scene.
6. About the only place you see or hear the word "righteous" is in church when reading the Bible.
7. What is *righteousness*?
  - a. it simply means to *be right*;
  - b. being in the place where God approves us.
8. As Moses says here in v. 25, under the covenant God made with Israel, *righteousness* was conditioned on obedience to the Law.
  - a. look at it again – there's an *If/Then condition*
  - b. "**THEN** it will be righteousness for us,"

- c. “**IF** we are careful to observe all these commandments”
9. For ancient Israel, being *right with God* was about what a person *did or didn't do*.
    - a. it was based in their *works* –
    - b. how well they *performed* in light of the commands & statutes of God.
  10. If & when they blew it, because it was inevitable that they would fail, then they had to *clear their guilt* by bringing a sacrifice.
  11. The blood of the sacrifice provided a *covering* to hide their guilt from God.
  12. As long as they were obedient – they were right with God.
    - a. as soon as they sinned, they were no longer right --
    - b. *until* they brought another sacrifice & once more covered over their guilt.
  13. This meant that *at best* they had a *very unstable* relationship with God.
    - a. theirs was a see-saw spiritual experience.
    - b. rarely sure if they were right with God.
  14. The only time they could be confident they *were* okay was when the smoke of their sacrifice ascended to heaven.
  15. But how long would it be before they sinned once more & another sacrifice would be needed?

### **C. Our Righteousness**

1. As Moses makes clear, Israel's righteousness came through *performance of the Law*.
2. Our righteousness is *also* based on *performance*. We *too* are made right with God *through works*.
3. Now, I know there are a whole bunch of you who are saying, “What? That's heresy!”
4. Before you get up & walk out in protest, let me explain.
5. While Israel's righteousness was based on *their* performance of & obedience to the law, ours is based, not in *our* performance, but in *Christ's*.
6. The only way a person can be right with God is to *obey Him*.
  - a. for Israel, that obedience was *to the Law*.
  - b. our obedience is *to believe in Christ* – who lived a life of *perfect righteousness* before God.
7. Being right with God *is* all about *works* – the only issue is *whose* works we stand in - *ours* or *Christ's*.
  - a. either we come to God *in ourselves*, bringing our *own* merit & effort,
  - b. or we come to God *in Christ*, standing in *His* merit.
8. Which do you suppose God accepts? Which passes the *test* of righteousness?
9. In case you don't know, let me tell you.
  - a. the prophet Isaiah tells us what a righteousness based on *our works* is like.
  - b. in Isaiah 64:6 we read, **“We are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags.”**
10. The Apostle Paul was someone who went through a radical transformation when he realized that being right with God was not about what *he did* but by believing in what Christ *had done*.

Turn to Philippians 3
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11. Listen to his description of his life before & after he came to faith in Christ in

Philippians 3:4-9 . . .

- a. he begins with a righteousness based on what Moses says here in Deut 6:25, his own works -

**4<sup>b</sup>If anyone thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: <sup>5</sup>circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.**

- b. Paul was a standout among his peers when it came to morality & keeping the rules of his religion as a Jew.
- c. and while on the *outside* he looked fine, on the inside he was plagued by the awareness that he didn't measure up.
- d. when Jesus met him on the Road to Damascus, Paul came to realize that the righteousness he needed wasn't based in *his works, his performance*, but came through faith in Christ who had already performed **FOR** him.
- e. so he goes on and says -

**7 But what things were gain to me,**

- f. meaning the points he'd tried racking up with God through his own works **these I have counted loss for Christ.**
- g. Paul had turned from trying to be right with God through his works to being right with God through what Jesus did.

**8Yet 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, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> 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;**

12. There it is – Paul lays it out for us:

- a. we can attempt to gain acceptance & righteousness with God through our own works --
- b. or we can *be* right with Him *through* the One He's already accepted.
- c. which do you choose?

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#### **D. Confidence**

1. As I mentioned before, the only time an Israelite could have confidence he/she was right with God was as the smoke of their sacrifice was rising to heaven.
2. As soon as they went away from the altar, they couldn't be sure they hadn't committed some sin.
3. This meant they were continually bringing sacrifices to the altar.
4. No doubt those whose hearts were tender toward God wished they could just *live* near the altar.
5. This was David's longing in Psalm 27:4 . . .

**One *thing* I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple.**

6. David knew the only way to *enjoy fellowship* with God was to be *right* with Him, and the only time he felt truly right with God was at the tabernacle, offering sacrifice to Him.
7. The same is true for us – our confidence in fellowship with God comes through sacrifice,
  - a. but not the offering of a goat or bull.
  - b. our sacrifice is Jesus Christ, & what He offered on the cross was enough *for all time*.
  - c. His is a *perfect sacrifice* that *forever cleanses* those who come to Him.
8. Our righteousness, & so our fellowship with God, is not the see-saw experience of the Israelite under the law –
  - a. it's a confident expectation that because Jesus is *eternally right* with God & we are *in* Him,
  - b. then *we too* are right with God & can enjoy the most intimate communion with Him every moment of every day, no matter where we are or what we're doing.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. The Question

1. Now we have the answer to that most important of all questions – “How can a person be right with God.”
2. Through faith in Jesus Christ; that what He did in living a sinless & perfect life, then dying for us & rising again from the dead, provides the ground upon which we can stand accepted by God for all eternity.

#### B. Working It Out

1. Now, here's what that means for us on a daily & practical basis –
  - a. Christian, God *already accepts* you *completely* in Christ.
  - b. you cannot make God accept or love you more!
  - c. your *fellowship* with God is *not* based on your *performance*, on whether or not you've been a good boy or girl.
  - d. your fellowship with God is based on your *new relationship* with God through faith in Jesus & what **HE'S** done.
  - e. in other words, the Father looks at you in the same way He looks at the Son, with full & unreserved acceptance & love.
  - g. **YOU** now are His son, His daughter.
  - h. and as such, your standing before God is based on *relationship*, not *performance*.
2. Let me use an example.
  - a. let's say you live in a house with a yard; that yard needs to be mowed & edged weekly. You don't have the time to do it yourself so you hire a lawn service.
  - b. keeping them & paying the monthly fee are based on one thing – their performance.
    - 1) if they do a good job, you'll keep them & they'll get paid.
    - 2) if they fail to perform to the standard you set, you'll fire them & get someone else.

- c. but let's say you have a teenage son & give him the task of doing the yard.
  - 1) if he fails to perform to the standard you set, you don't fire him & kick him out of the family.
  - 2) you work with & train him so that not only does he **DO** the yard,
  - 3) he comes to see that yard *as his*, & his doing the yard is part of what it means to be a member of the family.
- 3. Some of us in this room today base our approach to God like a *lawn service* instead of realizing we are His sons & daughters.
  - a. we think that it's all up to us, that we have to perform & that our closeness to God is based on how well we're doing.
    - 1) we think God's acceptance & blessing is based on what we do.
    - 2) this is the great error of *legalism*.
  - b. what God would have us know today is that because of what Christ **HAS DONE**, we cannot make ourselves more acceptable to Him.
  - c. and the great secret of intimacy with God is to let go of self-effort in earning our way to His favor, and instead, taking by faith what is already ours.

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- 4. Finally – there are those who say that a message like this is *dangerous* because it sounds like it doesn't matter what we do – that because God accepts us in Christ, obedience doesn't matter.
- 5. Even the Apostle Paul was accused of making it sound like obedience didn't matter when he preached this message of righteousness by faith. [\[1\]](#)
- 6. What do we say to that charge?
  - a. can the Christian live a *morally careless* life & still be right with God?
  - b. can a believer **live IN sin** & be righteous In Christ at the same time?
  - c. of course not!
  - d. the evidence we are truly God's sons & daughters is a growing family resemblance – we will look ever more like our Father.
- 7. The fruit of genuine faith is not perfection but growth *toward* it.

### **C. Are You Right With God?**

- 1. Let me end with a question: Are you right with God today?
  - 2. As you stand before God, do you come in yourself, or Christ?
  - 3. If you come in Christ, then know this, God fully accepts & loves you without reserve.
    - a. there is nothing you can do to make Him love you more.
    - b. God yearns for you to just bask in that love & acceptance & that you would forever be free from fear & worry.
  - 4. If you come in yourself, and think that you can be right before God in your own works, you are tragically mistaken.
    - a. you see, you're basing your ideas on what God accepts by comparing yourself to other people instead of God's standard.
    - b. God doesn't measure you against other people – His standard is perfection.
    - c. since no one but Jesus meets the criteria, no one gets in any other way but through Him.
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[\[1\]](#) Romans 3:8