

October 27, 2021

Righteousness Cannot Save

In our last meditation we saw that sincerity cannot save from sin. While we ought to be sincere in our faith, it is our faith in Christ that saves, not our sincerity. Many people are sincerely religious and yet lost without Christ and without hope. Today we come to **Romans 10:3**, where we see that righteousness cannot save. Righteousness, like sincerity, is important, but it cannot save.

In this verse Paul contrasts the righteousness of man with the righteousness of God, but before we consider these two, let us first define righteousness. Righteousness is the state or quality of being or doing that which is right or just, according to a rule, standard, or test, thereby distinguishing it from wrong. Where there is no rule or law, right and wrong lose their meaning and the difference between them ceases to exist. In order to determine what is right and wrong, there must be a clearly defined rule or standard. Herein lies the problem. Who has the authority to establish rule or law in order to determine what is right and wrong? Is each person free to establish their own code of right and wrong? Obviously not. Such thinking would lead to anarchy and chaos, so government was established to enact and enforce laws. But where does government get its authority and how does it determine what is right and wrong? If government gets its authority from man, as men come and go the laws would change. What we need is an unchanging authority upon which to base our rule of law.

Since man was created by God, only God has the authority to establish rules of right and wrong. Fortunately, God has not left us without guidance as to His will regarding right and wrong. God has given us His Word, the Holy Scriptures, as a guide. God's Word contains laws, statutes, judgments, principles, rules, etc. which govern the lives of men. What do **Psalms 19:7-11** and **II Timothy 3:16-17** teach us about God's Word? It is God's Word that determines what is right and what is wrong. If a nation uses the Word of God as the basis for their governing, the nation will be characterized by righteousness, but when a nation rejects or turns away from the Word of God, the nation will be characterized by unrighteousness. Our American democracy was established on principles from God's Word. What are some Bible principles or rules that our nation has gotten away from and what has been the result? Dr. James H. Brooks says, "The law of God is like a plumb-line, let down from heaven to test the uprightness of our character and the rectitude of our conduct; it is like an exact measure applied both to our inward and outward life to discover whether it is according to holiness..."

The righteousness of man refers to that which is just and right in the eyes of man. It is man's attempt to do right, to be a good person. What do **Psalms 14:1-3** and **Romans 3:10-19, 23** teach us about man's righteousness? **James 2:10** says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." No matter how good or righteous we are, the Bible says we have all sinned and are therefore guilty before God. It is not a matter of being more righteous than other men, God requires absolute righteousness. Man, at his very best, falls far short of absolute righteousness. We are all born with a sin nature. Even when we try to do good, we fail. Read over Paul's dilemma in **Romans 7:14-25**. What two laws were at work in

Paul's life? How does Paul refer to these two opposing forces in **Galatians 5:16-17**? Can you think of some Bible characters who trusted in their own righteousness, only to be rejected by God? If man's righteousness is insufficient to save, what hope is there?