**“The Righteousness of God” The Bible Echo 13, 11.**

E. J. Waggoner

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 1}

The righteousness of God, says Jesus, is the one thing to be sought in this life. Food and clothing are minor in comparison with it. God will supply them, as a matter of course, so that anxious care and worriment need not be depended on them; but to secure God’s kingdom and His righteousness should be the only object of life. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 2}

In 1 Corinthians 1:30 we are told that Christ is made unto us righteousness as well as wisdom; and since Christ is the wisdom of God, and in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, it is evident that the righteousness which life is made to us is the righteousness of God. let us see what this righteousness is. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 3}

In Psalm 119:172 the Psalmist thus addresses the Lord: “My tongue shall speak of Thy Word; for all Thy commandments are righteousness.” The commandments are righteousness, not simply in the abstract, but they are the righteousness of God. For proof read the following:- {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 4}

“Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but My salvation shall be for ever, and My righteousness shall not be abolished. Hearken unto Me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is My law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings.” Isaiah 51:6, 7. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 5}

What do we learn from this? That they who know the righteousness of God are those in whose heart is His law, and therefore that the law of God is the righteousness of God. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 6}

This may be proved again, as follows: “All unrighteousness is sin.” 1 John 5:17. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.” 1 John 3:4. Sin is the transgression of the law, and it is also unrighteousness; therefore sin and unrighteousness are identical. But if unrighteousness is transgression of the law, righteousness must be obedience to the law. Or, to put the proposition into mathematical form:- {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 7}

Unrighteousness-sin. John 5:17. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 8}

Transgression of the law-sin. 1 John 3:4. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 9}

Therefore, as two things that are equal to the same thing are equal to each other, we have:- {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 10}

Unrighteousness-transgression of the law, which is a negative equation. The same thing, stated in positive terms, would be:- {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 11}

Righteousness-obedience to the law. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 12}

Now what law is it obedience to which is righteousness and disobedience to which is sin? It is that law which says, “Thou shalt not covet;” for the Apostle Paul tells us that this law convinced him of sin. Romans 7:7. The law of ten commandments, then, is the measure of the righteousness of God. Since it is the law of God and is righteousness, it must be the righteousness of God. There is, indeed no other righteousness. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 13}

Since the law is the righteousness of God-a transcript of His character-it is easy to see that to fear God and keep His commandments is the whole duty of man. Ecclesiastes 12:13. Let no one think that his duty will be circumscribed if confined to the ten commandments, for they are “exceeding broad.” “The law is spiritual,” and comprehends a great deal more than can be discerned by an ordinary reader. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Corinthians 2:14. The exceeding breadth of the law of God can be realised only by those who prayerfully meditate upon it. A few texts of Scripture will suffice to show us something of its breadth. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 14}

In the sermon on the mount Christ said: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” Matthew 5:21, 22. And again: “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Verses 27, 28. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 15}

This does not mean that the commandments, “Thou shalt not kill,” and, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” are imperfect, or that God now requires a greater degree of morality from Christians than He did from His people who were called Jews. He requires the same from all men in all ages. The Saviour simply explained these commandments, and showed their spirituality. To the unspoken charge of the Pharisees, that He was ignoring and undermining the moral law, He replied by saying that He came for the purpose of establishing the law, and that it could not be abolished, and then He expounded the true meaning of the law in a way that convicted them of ignoring and disobeying it. He showed that even a look or a thought may be a violation of the law, and that it is indeed a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 16}

In this Christ did not reveal a new truth, but only brought to light and unfolded an old one. The law meant just as much when He proclaimed it from Sinai as when He expounded it on the mountain in Judea. When, in tones that shook the earth, He said, “Thou shalt not kill,” He meant, “Thou shalt not cherish anger in the heart, thou shalt not indulge in envy, nor strife, nor anything which is in the remotest degree akin to murder.” All this and much more is contained in the words, “Thou shalt not kill.” And this was taught by the inspired words of the Old Testament; for Solomon showed that the law deals with things unseen as well as things seen, when he wrote:- {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 17}

“Let us heart the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 18}

The argument is this: The judgment passes upon every secret thing; the law of God is the standard in the judgment,—it determines the quality of every act, whether good or evil; therefore the law of God forbids evil in thought as well as in deed. So the conclusion of the whole matter is that the commandments of God contain the whole duty of man, and are therefore the true standard of righteousness. {BEST March 14, 1898, par. 19}

E. J. WAGGONER.

**“Righteousness and How Obtained” The Bible Echo 13, 12.**

E. J. Waggoner

“The doers of the law,” says Paul, “shall be justified.” To *justify* means to *make righteous*, or to show one to be righteous. It is evident that perfect obedience to a perfectly righteous law would constitute one a righteous person. It was God’s design that such obedience should be rendered to the law by all His creatures; and in this way the law was ordained unto life. Romans 7:10. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 1}

But for one to be judged “a doer of the law” it would be necessary that he had kept the law in its fullest measure every moment of his life. If he had come short of this, he could not be said to have done the law. It is a sad fact that there are in all the human race no doers of the law, for both Jews and Gentiles are “all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unpardonable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” Romans 3:9-12. The law speaks to all who are within its sphere; and in all the world there is not one who can open his mouth to clear himself from the charge of sin which it brings against him. Every mouth is stopped, and all the world stand guilty before God. Verse 19. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Verse 23. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 2}

**THE LAW CANNOT JUSTIFY THE SINNER**

Therefore, although “the doers of the law shall be justified,” it is evident that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” Verse 20. The law, being “holy, and just, and good,” cannot justify a sinner. In other words, a just law cannot declare that the one who violates it is innocent. A law that would justify a wicked man would be a wicked law. The law should not be reviled because it cannot justify sinners. On the contrary, it should be extolled on that account. The fact that the law will not declare sinners to be righteous,—that it will not say that men have kept it when they have violated it, is in itself sufficient evidence that it is good. Men applaud an incorruptible earthly judge, one who cannot be bribed, and who will not declare a guilty man innocent. Surely, they ought to magnify the law of God, which will not bear false witness. It is the perfection of righteousness, and therefore it is forced to declare the sad fact that not one of Adam’s race has fulfilled its requirements. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 3}

Moreover, the fact that to do the law is simply man’s duty shows that when he has come short in a single particular he can never make it up. The requirements of each precept of the law are so broad,—the whole law is so spiritual,—that an angel could render no more than simple obedience. Yea, more, the law is the righteousness of God,—a transcript of His character,—and since His character cannot be different from what it is, it follows that even God Himself cannot be better than the measure of goodness demanded by His law. He cannot be better than He is and the law declares what He is. What hope, then, that one who has failed, in even one precept, can add enough extra goodness to make up the full measure? He who attempts to do that sets before himself the impossible task of being better than God requires, yea, even better than God Himself. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 4}

**MAN’S INABILITY TO DO RIGHT**

But it is not simply in one particular that men have failed. They have come short in every particular. It is impossible for fallen man, with his weakened power, to do even a single act that is up to the perfect standard. This proposition needs no further proof than a restatement of the fact that the law is the measure of God’s righteousness. Surely there are none so presumptuous as to claim that any act of their lives has been or could be as good as if done by the Lord Himself. Everyone must say with the psalmist, “My goodness extendeth not to Thee.” Psalm 16:2. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 5}

Christ, who “needed not that any should testify of man: for He knew what was in man” (John 2:25), said: “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.” Mark 7:21-23. In other words, it is easier to do wrong than it is to do right and the things which a person naturally does are evil. Evil dwells within, and is a part of the being. Therefore the apostle says: “The carnal [fleshly, natural] mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” Romans 8:7, 8. And again: “The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.” Galatians 5:17. Since evil is a part of man’s very nature, being inherited by each individual from a long line of sinful ancestors, it is very evident that whatever righteousness springs from him must be only like “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6) compared with the spotless robe of the righteousness of God. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 6}

The impossibility of good deeds proceeding from a sinful heart is thus forcibly illustrated by the Saviour: “For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil; for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” Luke 6:44, 45. That is to say- {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 7}

**A MAN CANNOT DO GOOD UNTIL HE FIRST BECOMES GOOD**

Therefore, deeds done by a sinful person have no effect whatever to make him righteous, but, on the contrary, coming from an evil heart, they are evil, and so add to the sum of his sinfulness. Only evil can come from an evil heart, and multiplied evil cannot make one good deed; therefore it is useless for an evil person to think to become righteous by his own efforts. He must first be made righteous before he can do the good that is required of him, and which he wants to do. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 8}

The case, then, stands thus: 1. The law of God is perfect righteousness; and perfect conformity to it is demanded of everyone who shall enter the kingdom of heaven. 2. But the law has not a particle of righteousness to bestow upon any man, for all are sinners, and are unable to comply with its requirements. No matter how diligently nor how zealously a man works, nothing that be can do will meet the full measure of the law’s demands. It is too high for him to attain to; be cannot obtain righteousness by the law. “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified [made righteous] in His sight.” What a deplorable condition! We must have the righteousness of the law or we cannot enter heaven, and yet the law has no righteousness for one of us. It will not yield to our most persistent and energetic efforts the smallest portion of that holiness without which no man can see the Lord. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 9}

**WHO THEN, CAN BE SAVED**

Can there, then, be such a thing as a righteous person?—Yes, for the Bible often speaks of them. It speaks of Lot as “that righteous man;” it says, “Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him; for they shall eat the fruit of their doings” (Isaiah 3:10), thus indicating that there will be righteous persons to receive the reward; and it plainly declares that there will be a righteous nation at the last, saying: “In that day shall this song be sung in the lewd of Judah: We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.” Isaiah 26:1, 2. David says, “Thy law is the truth.’ Psalm 119:142. It is not only truth, but it is the sum of all truth; consequently the nation that keeps the truth will be a nation that keeps the law of God. Such will be doers of His will, and they shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 7:21. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 10}

**HOW RIGHTEOUSNESS IS OBTAINED**

The question, then, is, How may the righteousness that is necessary in order that one may enter that city, be obtained? To answer this question is the great work of the gospel. Let us first have an object lesson on justification, or the imparting of righteousness. The fact may help us to a better understanding of the theory. The example is given in Luke 18:9-14, in these words:- {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 11}

“And he spake this parable onto certain which trusted is themselves that they were righteous, and despised others. Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 12}

This was given to show how we may not, and how we may, attain to righteousness. The Pharisees are not extinct; there are many in these days who expect to gain righteousness by their own good deeds. They trust in themselves that they are righteous. They do not always so openly boast of their goodness; but they show in other ways that they are trusting to their own righteousness. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 13}

But what is the result?—The man who trusted in his own righteousness had none, while the man who prayed, in heart-felt contrition, “God be merciful to me, a sinner,” went down to his house a righteous man. Christ says that he went justified, that is, made righteous. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 14}

Notice that the publican did something more than bewail his sinfulness; he asked for mercy. What is mercy?—It is unmerited favour. It is the disposition to treat a man better than he deserves. And this is God’s disposition towards repentant sinners. “As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed out transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:11, 12. “If we confess our sins. He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 15}

**A FREE GIFT**

Let us now read the direct Scripture statement of how righteousness is bestowed. The apostle, having proved that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, so that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in His sight proceeds to say that we are “justified [made righteous] freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” “Being made righteous freely.” How else could it be? Since the best efforts of a sinful man have not the least effect toward producing righteousness, it is evident that the only way it can come to him is as a gift. That righteousness is a gift is plainly stated by Paul in Romans 5:17: “For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ.” It is because righteousness is a gift that eternal life which is the reward of righteousness is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 16}

**RECEIVED BY FAITH**

“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.” God puts His righteousness upon the believer. He covers him with it so that his sin no more appears. Then the forgiven one can exclaim with the prophet:- {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 17}

“I will greatly rejoin in the Lord, my soul

shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.” Isaiah 61:10. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 18}

**RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT THE LAW**

But what about “the righteousness of God without the law?” How does that accord with the statement that the law is the righteousness of God, and that outside of its requirements there is not righteousness? There is no contradiction here. The law is not ignored by this process. Note carefully: Who gave the law?—Christ. How did He speak it?—“As one having authority,” even as God. The law sprang from Him the same as from the Father, and is simply a declaration of the righteousness of His character. Therefore the righteousness which comes by the faith of Jesus Christ is the same righteousness that is epitomised in the law; and this is further proved by the fact that it is “witnessed by the law.” {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 19}

Let the reader try to picture the scene. Here stands the law as the swift witness against the sinner. It cannot change, and it will not call a sinner a righteous man. The convicted sinner tries again and again to obtain righteousness from the law, but it resists all his advances. It cannot be bribed by any amount of penance or professedly good deeds. But here stands Christ, “full of grace” as well as of truth, calling the sinner to Him. At last the sinner, weary of the vain struggle to get righteousness from the law, listens to the voice of Christ, and flees to His outstretched arms. Hiding in Christ, he is coveted with His righteousness; and now behold! he has obtained, through faith in Christ, that for which he has been vainly striving. He has the righteousness which the law requires, and it is the genuine article, because he obtained it from the Source of Righteousness,—from the very place at whence the law came. And the law witnesses to the genuineness of this righteousness. It says that so long as the man retains that, it will go into court and defend him against all accusers. It will witness to the fact that he is a righteous man. {BEST March 21, 1898, par. 20}

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