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# The Holy Bible



## Commentaries

by

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## Righteousness

# Righteousness

The following passage is often quoted to justify the statement that “no-one was righteous at any time”.

*Ro 3:10 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 unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

It is a quotation from David (Psalm 14, 53)

*14:1 <<To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.>> The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*

But Paul (in Ro 3:10) does not include everyone in his condemnation, only the Jews who were not obedient to the Law or who were not Christians. Paul could not possibly know the heart of every Jew, as only God knows who is righteous for sure. Many Jews were known by Christ to be righteous according to the statement in Mt 9:13.

Paul implies that, before Christ gave the Apostles the gift of the Holy Spirit, righteousness came only from obedience to God's laws, which before the Day of Pentecost was the only way that man could be declared righteous by God and justified.

There were many righteous Jews.

*Mt 9:13 (b), Mk 2:17 (b), Lu 5:32 for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*

In the Psalm it is the **children of men** whom God is judging, not the children of God.

*Mt 13:17 For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see,...*

*Mt 23:35\* That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias,...*

*Lu 1:6 And they (Zacharias and Elizabeth) were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*

*Lu 23:47 Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man (Jesus)*

*1 John 3:4-7 "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. ... Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he (Christ) is righteous."*

Even before the Day of Pentecost many obedient people had been declared righteous by God because they had kept His commandments. Jesus reminded His Apostles: *"If ye love me, keep my commandments"* (Jo. 14:15) and much later "John" wrote *"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments."* (1 John 5:2). The fulfilling of the Law was called *"Love" Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law* ( Ro 13:10).

Since the Day of Pentecost there is another way for God to declare a man righteous - by the presence in man's soul of the Holy Spirit.

“the presence of the Holy Ghost shed abroad in our hearts, the Author both of faith and of renewal, this is really that which makes us righteous, and that our righteousness is the possession of that presence.” Rev. John Henry Newman.

From the indwelling of God the Holy Spirit, man can fulfill the Law. By fulfilling the law - man shall live.

*Luke 10:27, 28 “And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.”*

The difference between righteousness which is of the Law (Ro 10:15) and righteousness which is of faith (vv.) is only in the way that this quality of righteousness is made apparent to God. On the one hand this quality is evident in a man who is obedient to the Law; on the other, in the man who possesses the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The righteousness of faith has the same effect as the righteousness of the Law. It results in God's declaration that one is righteous.

God is said to write His Laws on the heart of the righteous.

## Salvation

**A**n observant Jew (I say observant because the believer must already believe in Almighty God) must also believe in his heart that God has resurrected Jesus. This belief in one's heart is wrought by the presence of the Holy Spirit, and the possession of the Holy Spirit proves that one is righteous. With the mouth he must also confess (since the gospel was an oral tradition at this time) to a basic understanding of who Jesus was, which allowed entrance into the ekklesia for an education, in order to be brought to salvation.

*(Ro 10:9 -) That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"*

“Membership in the Church is indeed no guarantee of ultimate salvation: many who are now within the Church may be lost, and many now outside it may be saved.” A. M. Ramsey Archbishop of Canterbury to King George VI . in *Catholicity* report.1946

*Ekklesia* is the Greek word which has been translated variously as congregation or church, but could equally be considered a school, as churches of the 1st. - 3rd c. were primarily places to learn about the gospel.

**F**aith is given by God to man so that he will believe in God's promise, and believe that He will fulfill His promise .

*Acts 15:8, 9 "And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, ... (and) purifying their hearts by faith."*

*Romans 3:30 "Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith."*

In these verses, God is providing the faith.

Being saved by faith in Paul's gospel meant:

that with God's Holy Spirit within a man's soul, he will study and learn from God's teachers so that he may inherit the promise that God has made to him, even though he may not understand the full nature of the promise, nor the end result. The learning included

- ▶ Scripture study to understand Christ.
- ▶ Learning to be obedient to His commandments,
- ▶ Behaving as Christ has commanded, and
- ▶ Purifying the heart.

At the end of the training the believer would no longer deliberately sin, and would be saved (from sin).

So you see that being declared righteous and justified by God, is not the same as being saved. Not even a righteous Jew could be saved by the Law unless he also believed in his heart that God has raised Jesus from the dead.

**I**n Romans 11,12, Paul explains that only a remnant of the Jews believed in their hearts that Jesus was raised from the dead. The majority of the Jews had been blinded by God to this truth. To fulfill the godly commission assigned to Israel, and to ensure that Israel finally completed this commission for God, the commission was “subcontracted” to those Jews, observant or not, who did believe. Eventually the entire weight of the task was carried by the other Nations (gentiles) to “the world”. Those Jews who were blinded to the truth of Jesus by God, will have their blindness removed by God at some later date (*after the fullness of the Gentiles is come in*), and they will be saved - as God promised. As Paul explains in Ro. 11,12, the Gentiles will save the Jews.

You can see how important it was that God provided another way for people to become righteous, without having to observe the Jewish Laws of circumcision and so on, for the other Nations (Gentiles) balked at having to observe the Jewish Laws in order to be saved.

God offered the Holy Spirit to men, and wrote His laws on their hearts, so that one way or the other, man would become obedient to God’s Laws. It was Christ’s resurrection that brought man the Holy Spirit. So, when we read that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law, we understand that the Holy Spirit is what enables man to be declared righteous, and enables man to fulfill the Law. And that fulfillment of the Law is called “Love”.

**S**o: “love God” means fulfilling the Law of God.. “Love your neighbor as yourself” means fulfilling the laws relating to neighbors - do unto others as you would be done to etc.

The possession of the Holy Spirit enables you to fulfill the Law, and with His possession, God will declare you righteous, just as He declared righteous those who were obedient to the written Law (much harder to do without the Holy Spirit, impossible if you are a nonobservant Jew).

How do you get the gift of the Holy Spirit?

Two ways: God gives this gift to those that He has previously chosen for His own purpose - such as the Apostles, Paul, the Church Fathers, Priests, Deacons, Teachers etc. For God needs these people to carry out His commission. Once chosen by God, He provides all that is necessary to ensure that the job assigned to them is completed.

And He also offers this gift to all who He calls, who with hearty repentance, and by baptism (later, Eucharist) demonstrate their commitment. If a person takes possession of this gift, he/she will lead a renewed life, and will be obedient to God and The Holy Spirit will lead him to be saved by His church.

It is the task of the Priests, Deacons, Teachers, to teach believers to observe everything that Jesus had commanded the Apostles, and bring believers to salvation.

Paul often talks about *Christ being within you*, or the *Kingdom of God being within you*, and I think that by this he means the *indwelling God the Holy Spirit*, which is the manifestation of the love between *God the Father* and *God the Son*. In other tracts I have referred to *the Kingdom of God* as being the *incarnation of Christ in man*, and I think that this is just another way of thinking about it.

Those chosen are baptized also by “fire”. I think that means: with enthusiasm and tenacity to complete the task assigned them.

**I**f God has declares someone righteous, then people should be able to see external evidence of this. For the Jews the external signs are orthodox behavior - observance of all the Jewish laws. Of course you cannot read peoples hearts, so it is possible to be mislead by someone who professes to be orthodox, yet does not observe the laws (some of which are without physical evidence). For the Christian who has been declared righteous, the evidence is a renewed life, but what is this?

**YE** that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his holy ways; ... to celebrate the Lord's Supper ... have a lively and stedfast faith in Christ our Saviour; amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men; ... To him therefore, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, let us give (as we are most bounden) continual thanks; submitting ourselves wholly to his holy will and pleasure, and studying to serve him in true holiness and righteousness all the days of our life ...

... being ready to make restitution and satisfaction, according to the uttermost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other; and being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended you, (1662 BCP Communion Service).

But

“Membership in the Church is indeed no guarantee of ultimate salvation: many who are now within the Church may be lost, and many now outside it may be saved”. Archbishop A.M. Ramsey to King George VI, *Catholicity* Report 1946

**I**n the words of Archbishop Frederick Temple: ‘Men speak as if Christians came first and the Church after: as if the origin of the Church was in the wills of the individuals who composed it. But, on the contrary, throughout the teaching of the Apostles, we see it is the Church that comes first, and the members of it afterwards. . . . In the New Testament . . . the Kingdom of Heaven is already in existence, and men are invited into it. The Church takes its origin, not in the will of man, but in the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

Everywhere men are called in: they do not come in and make the Church by coming. They are called into that which already exists: they are recognized as members when they are within; but their membership depends on their admission, and not upon their constituting themselves into a body in the sight of the Lord’. (from the Sermon: *Catholicity and Individualism*,...

In the New Testament there is a looking-forward to the glorious Church of the future. But it and the imperfect Church of the present are *one thing*. The heavenly Church of the Age to Come will not take the place of the present visible Church. It is the Church that now is, that then will be. Then the Christians will have fully become what already they are. We *are* partakers of Christ, *provided* that we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end (Hebrews iii. 14). The unity of the Church and the sanctification of the individual are already given: their context is that of eschatology not of evolution, of growth and not of progress.

Hence it is a distortion of the apostolic doctrine to say that men are *first* united to Christ, through faith, within an invisible society of the truly faithful, and *then* find admission to the visible Church. The right order is not: Christ—faithful individuals—the Church; but: Christ—the Church—faithful individuals. It is Christ-in-His-Body who justifies men, and their justification *is* their deliverance into His Body. The visible Church is a part of the Gospel: there is no Scriptural sanction for the view that the Gospel is something that is complete without the Church, and that the Church is a further stage that follows after the acceptance of the Gospel

(iii) The ‘wholeness’ of the visible Church manifests itself in its outward order. In more ways than one the apostolic theology indicates this. The modern tendency is to make a sharp distinction between the spiritual and the bodily: this is alien to Biblical thought. To receive the Spirit *is* to belong to the Body, whose several organs are a very part of it, representing diversities of office amongst its members. Further, the frequent emphasis laid by the apostolic writers upon the principle of subordination is significant: the mutual submission of the members of the Church one to another in respect of their diverse offices is a part of their submission to the rule of God in the pattern of the new Creation. Among the diversities of office the apostolate is unique. The apostles were commissioned by our Lord, and had authority to rule, to teach and to ordain in the new Israel—representing Him who is King, Shepherd and High-priest. They were integral to the existence of the new Israel. They were the authorized eye-witnesses of the original events of the Gospel; but otherwise their functions remain in their successors—namely **to teach**, to rule, and to ordain in the name of Christ and of the whole Church.

(iv) This many-sided ‘wholeness’ of the primitive Church embodies itself no less plainly in the Christian rite of Initiation. In the Church there are no ‘grades’ of advancing spiritual knowledge and privilege, as in the Greek ‘Mysteries’. A single rite (combining two *momenta* of salvation, later distinguished as ‘Baptism’ and ‘Confirmation’, but originally regarded as normally inseparable) brought the Catechumen by one and the same Divine action to the Fatherhood of God and the Body of Christ and the vivification by the Spirit and the fellowship of the earthly Church. It refashioned him by regeneration and inaugurated in him that ‘eternal life’ by which the Christian already lives even in this world. It elicited and expressed his response to the offer of Redemption by the wholehearted act of faith involved in the renunciation of the devil and the pagan world and the acceptance of the Creed.

It was the ‘New Creation’ of the son of fallen Adam afresh in the Image of God according to the Second Adam, bestowing at once remission of sins, illumination, and the moral power to lead the new life. In itself and by itself it made the Christian one of the *laos* or ‘People of God’, with all the high privileges and the eternal destiny which that involves, opening to him the whole offer of Christian salvation on precisely the same terms as to the Apostles themselves...

(vi) Out of this complex of Christian life, *lived* and embodied in dogma, worship and institutions, proceeded the Scriptures of the New Testament, which presuppose and interpret the faith and ‘the Way’ from within which they are written. To abstract them from the setting and life and belief which produced them (in other words, to oppose ‘Scripture’ and ‘Tradition’) is wholly artificial and arbitrary. ... Historically speaking, they are ultimately ‘canonized’ in the second century, as ‘inspired Scriptures’ beside and above the **Jewish Old Testament Scriptures, which were the only Bible of the primitive Church:** canonized rather as an authoritative witness to and standard for the maintenance of ‘Tradition’, than as an independent theological authority in themselves. ... Though the late date at which their canonization was effected ... is reflected in the long-continued doubts in particular Churches of the canonicity of certain Books, the continuing ability of the Church of the early centuries to contain the many-sided fullness of Apostolic truth is revealed by its eventual acceptance of so diverse a collection, as all alike and equally authoritative and ‘inspired’. Only a Church which was not afraid of ‘tensions’ and which was able to discern without prejudice the ‘wholeness’ of the revelation in Christ, would have dared to set side by side four differing Gospels, the Epistles of St. Paul and St. James, the apostolic history of Acts and the eschatology of the Apocalypse, and to acclaim them all as normative.

(A.M. Ramsey ABC, *Catholicity Report* 1946)

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