

## OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

*And it shall be **our righteousness**, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.*

*Deuteronomy 6:25*

*And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is **the righteousness of saints**.*

*Revelation 19:8*

Last week we talked about righteousness, and I would like to continue talking about this subject again because I didn't have enough time to say everything that needed to be said about the issue last week. The issue of righteousness is the most important issue we face at the moment. It's more important than all the political events that are happening in the world. It's more important than the fact that we are losing our freedoms and our nation. It's more important than the murder of millions of unborn children each year. It's more important than our money, our possessions, our jobs, our homes, or even our family.

The issue of righteousness is more important than anything that tops the average believer's list because all these things are about to pass away, and when they do, the only thing that will be of any importance or of any value will be righteousness. The only thing that will be of any importance or of any value will be the *measure* of righteousness we actually possess—not the “imputed” righteousness we have all been given, but how much *actual* righteousness we have obtained. The only thing that will be worth anything in the coming kingdom will be the nature of God. So it will be very important just how much of that nature we have appropriated during our sojourn on this earth.

So I want to talk about righteousness from the perspective of its relationship to obedience. For you see, without obedience, you and I will never walk in actual righteousness. Obedience is *the key* to everything that pertains to righteousness. Please notice that in both the Old and the New Testaments, the Scripture talks about the righteousness of God's people. It is said of those under the first covenant that if they *obey* the Lord—that is, if they obey His Law and the words of His prophets—it would be *their* righteousness. It doesn't say their obedience would be *God's* righteousness. It says their obedience would be *their* righteousness. It could be *their* righteousness because they were responsible to obey the Law. They were responsible to obey the words of the prophets.

Let me digress for a few minutes because it's important that we understand the purpose of the Law. Virtually all Christian ministers teach that *the reason* God gave Israel the Law was in order to show them how utterly incapable they were of obeying it. This way, they would not try to be justified by works, but by faith. The basic assumption is that if a Hebrew had actually *succeeded* in keeping the Law, that obedience would have justified him and made Jesus' sacrifice unnecessary. Since the Bible states plainly that it is not possible to be justified by works, everyone just assumes that it was likewise, not possible to keep the Law. Thus, preachers wax eloquent on the futility of trying to *earn* God's salvation by keeping the Law. The Law is cast in a *negative* light, being associated closely with legalism, self-righteousness, and in general, man's attempt to save himself rather than submit to the Cross. But the Law was never intended to be a vehicle of justification! It was intended to be the means of sanctification—two totally different operations.

Of course, it is true that some (not all) Jews confused the two and ended up trying to be justified by obedience. But this was never God's intention. God asked them to keep the Law so they would be *sanctified*. It was not wrong for them to strive to obey the Torah. It was only wrong to assume that such obedience could justify them.

Those who teach the reason God gave Israel the Law was to show them how impossible it was to keep it, so they would then seek justification by faith instead of works, never seem to question the illogical and unreasonable *conclusions* this view demands. If God knew in advance that no person could ever possibly obey the Law, then why did He punish people for failing to obey it? God gave Israel the Law and commanded them to obey it. He said *if* they obeyed it, He would bless them; but *if* they disobeyed it, He would curse them—all the while knowing that no one could possibly obey it. Since it was really impossible to obey it in the first place, no one did. So God punished them for failing to obey something that was impossible to obey in the first place? What a twisted image of God's justice such an idea portrays!

The idea that the Law was a vehicle of justification—or even a *theoretical* vehicle of justification—is absurd. Yet this is exactly Evangelical religious leaders have been teaching for hundreds of years. Sometimes it's taught implicitly, sometimes it's taught explicitly. All of them teach implicitly that under the first covenant there were two ways to obtain salvation—at least theoretically. One way was by keeping the Law—which supposedly no one could possibly do. The other avenue was by faith. But you see, saying it was possible to be justified by keeping the Law, or even that it was *theoretically* possible to do so, is worse than absurd because it imputes unrighteousness to the Lord. It casts Him in the role of an unjust tyrant who played a cruel joke on His own people.

It was possible to obey the Law. The Bible says people did obey it (*Ps. 119:55; Luke 1:5-6; Phil. 3:6*). In addition, the whole sacrificial system was designed to provide forgiveness when a person did transgress the commandment (*Lev. 16:21-30*). This means that even if a person did break the Law, as long as he repented in his heart and brought the appropriate sacrificial offering, he was *still* keeping the Law because he was keeping the *sacrificial* portion of the Law. He was doing what God had commanded!

Well, if it was possible to keep the Law, then why couldn't that obedience justify the person? Because in order to stand justified before God Almighty, a person has to possess the *same kind* of holy and righteous *nature* that He possesses. He has to be *as holy* as God Himself is. Obedience to the Law, even perfect obedience, could not change man's basic problem—which is that he possessed only *one* nature, a nature that is contaminated by sin, a nature that is fallen. No matter how well it behaved, no matter what it did, the Adamic man could never be *as holy* as God.

God never intended to justify His people through their obedience to the Law. He used their obedience to sanctify them. When He said be ye holy, He meant be ye sanctified. The way to be ye sanctified was to obey ye the Law—and the Adamic man could obey the Law because the Law only dealt with the outward man. The Law was given to control the outward man. It was not give to deliver the outward man from itself because deliverance was not possible at the time. The only way the Adamic man can be delivered from *itself* is when there is another man to choose.

As I said last week, until the resurrection of Jesus, there was only one man—the Adamic man. True deliverance for the Adamic man was not possible until a new man became available. The best God could

do was give His people a way to *control* the Adamic man and give it something that would help it produce Adamic righteousness. That was the purpose of the Law—to control the outer man and to produce a certain level of righteousness—that is, Adamic righteousness. This is why God could justly punish the Hebrews when they failed to keep the Law. They had the power to keep it! If it was impossible to keep the Law, God would be completely unjust for punishing people when they failed to obey it.

Under the Old Covenant, the saints were justified by faith and sanctified *by obedience* to God. That is, by obeying His Law and the guidance of His priests and prophets. The Law and the Prophets explained and defined what sin was, not in order to condemn all the Hebrews to Hell, but to show the people how to sanctify the Adamic man, to sanctify themselves *outwardly*.

I'm sure that many of the saints called upon the Lord to help them obey Him, especially when they were faced with things that their wills did not want to yield to. And I have no doubt that God helped them in some way. It couldn't have been the same way He helps us who are born again and have a new man. But I'm sure He did help them in some way. But even though God was helping them in some way, that does not change the fact that it was *they* who bore the responsibility of *doing* what God commanded them to do. The fact that they called upon God to help them, and the fact that He did help them, does not diminish or cancel out the fact that He *held them accountable* for obeying or disobeying Him.

Under the New Covenant, the saints are also justified by faith and sanctified *by obedience* to God. That is, to Him personally. This is why the Holy Spirit is sent into the lives of the saints. He is our Torah. He is our Law. He is our Prophet. His task is to show us what God (not Moses) defines as sin and to help us overcome that sin. He does this so we can sanctify ourselves *inwardly*. Of course, we need the Lord's help to sanctify us—especially because of the kind of sanctification He is demanding, which is a total cleansing of the *inside*. We sanctify ourselves by allowing the Spirit to *empower us* to obey what He is telling us to do. But even though God must empower us to obey, that does not change the fact that it is we who bear responsibility of obeying because we have the power to choose to yield to that power or resist it and do our own will. It is the *power of choice* that makes us responsible, and thus accountable, for obeying or disobeying God, even though He has to give us the power to obey.

You see, if we are *not* responsible for anything in the salvation process, then neither can we be held accountable for anything we do or fail to do in that process. We can't be rewarded for obeying God, and we can't be punished for disobeying Him. Only if we bear some measure of responsibility for our actions can we be *judged* for those actions. If God is the one who is doing everything for us regarding our salvation, if we have no responsibility, then He is the only one that's accountable for what we do or fail to do. But He has given us an awesome gift called the power of choice. That power not only places a certain amount of responsibility on our shoulders for our own salvation, it makes us *accountable* for the choices we make.

So when people under the Old Covenant obeyed God and walked in righteousness, they could say it was their righteousness without sealing the glory from God. The same is true when it comes to those under the New Covenant. John saw God's people dressed in fine linen, clean and white. That linen is clearly said to be the "righteousness of saints". It doesn't say the linen is the *imputed* righteousness of Christ that was accounted to the saints. Nor does it say the linen is the *actual* righteousness of Christ being manifested through the saints—though that's what it is. It says the linen is their righteousness. The reason it can be said

that the righteousness they have walked in is their righteousness is because *they* were the ones who *were responsible* to allow the Holy Spirit to bring that righteousness forth in them. They were the ones who were responsible to do all the things we are commanded to do throughout the New Testament. Just because we can't do them alone, just because we need help in order to obey the commands of the Lord, that doesn't mean it's not *us* who is doing them. That doesn't mean God no longer *holds us responsible* for obeying or not obeying.

Again, it's true that the righteousness of the saints before the New Covenant is much different than the righteousness of the saints under the New Covenant because the righteousness we are to walk in under the New Covenant is *God's* righteousness. But that's not really the issue. I think everyone agrees that the righteousness New Testament believers are to walk in is divine righteousness. The question is: when we are walking in that righteousness, is it *our* righteousness, or does it forever belong to God alone?

According to Calvin, that righteousness remains the property of God alone. Well, if this is true, why did the apostle John say "*the righteousness of saints*" instead of the righteousness of Christ, or the righteousness of Christ in the saints? Didn't he realize that by saying that, he was *stealing* the glory from God? Didn't he realize that by saying that, he was giving the glory to the saints for *choosing* to walk in righteousness instead of giving the glory to God for *causing* them to choose to walk in righteousness?

If the apostle John had only sat under the ministry of John Calvin or Apostasy Watch, he would have known better than to make such a foolish statement. He would have made sure he didn't give any glory to the saints for anything they did. He would have made sure God got all the glory.

*Little children, let no man deceive you: he that **doeth** righteousness is **righteous**, even as he [the Lord] is righteous.*

*1 John 3:7*

It appears that John had a real problem with his flesh wanting to take the glory from God! Here he says very clearly that the person who *does* righteousness *is* righteous. Since we are talking about what people do, this can't be a reference to imputed righteousness. The person who does righteousness *is* righteous! You don't see any of the *false* humility in brother John that marks all Calvinists. Calvinists aren't really humble, they are filled with religious pride.

John wasn't obsessed with making sure nobody claimed to be righteous because that would be stealing God's glory. He said the person who walks in righteousness is righteous. That means, if you are walking in righteousness, you can say: "*I am righteous*". The fact that God has to be involved in bringing us to a state of actual righteousness doesn't take away the fact that we are righteous once we have been brought to that place. If someone trains you to be an electrician, they are giving you their knowledge. They are giving you something you can't get any other way. But once you acquire that knowledge and get your license, you *are* an electrician. It doesn't matter who gave you the knowledge to become an electrician, that knowledge is now yours and you *are* an electrician. Well, that's the way it is with righteousness. The righteous man knows that he is walking in righteousness because of what God has done in his life; so he has no problem giving glory back to God. He also knows he must stay in union with God if he is to keep walking in righteousness.

However, that does not change that fact that *he* is righteous. It doesn't change the fact that he has freely chosen righteousness and is walking in righteousness. Regardless of how he got there, regardless of who helped him or how much he was helped—he is now righteous because he *does* righteousness. This is something the average Calvinist will not, and indeed cannot accept. So if you ever want to watch a Calvinist go into orbit, just tell him you think *you* are good and that *you* are righteous.

The real question is this: is God redeeming you and making you righteous, or is He replacing you with Christ? Will you go through eternity saying, “*I’m wicked; only Christ in me is righteous*”? Don’t you realize that God want’s to purify you and make you holy—not your “flesh” (which can never be made holy); and not Christ in you (He’s already holy); but you? Maybe we need to go over some basics concerning who you really are before going any further.

Do you know that you are not your flesh nature? You *have* a flesh nature, but that flesh nature is not you. It’s not the totality of what makes you, you. You and your flesh are inseparable until you are born again, but they are *not* identical. The fact that you are not identical to the flesh nature is brought out in passages where Paul tells us to “put off” the old man and “put on” the new man.

*That ye put off concerning the former conversation **the old man**, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on **the new man**, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.*

*Ephesians 4:22-24*

As I said last week, the “old man” is our flesh nature. The “new man” is Christ in you. Please notice that Paul told us to put the one off and put the other on. Such an admonition would be absurd unless you and the old man are *not* identical. Who do you think Paul is talking to when he says put the one man off and put the other man on? Is he telling the old man to *put himself off* and put the new man on? That’s ridiculous! There’s a third entity being referred to by Paul. That third entity is the one he’s talking to when he tells us to put the one man off and put the other man on. That third entity is the real you. It’s the “I” Paul keeps referring to in Romans chapter seven. It’s *neither* the old man or the new man. There is a *person* inside of you who is neither the old man or the new man, but who must choose between them.

*If then **I** do that which **I** would not, **I** consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is **no more I that do it**, but sin that dwelleth in me. For **I** know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good **I** find not. For the good that **I** would **I** do not: but the evil which **I** would not, that **I** do. Now if **I** do that **I** would not, it is **no more I that do it**, but sin that dwelleth in me. . . For **I** delight in the law of God after the **inward man**: But **I** see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing **me** into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.*

*Romans 7:16-20 & 22-23*

Paul is describing the struggle between the person (the “I”) who wants to serve and please God and the “flesh” that wars against his desire and his choice. The sin that dwells in him seems to be stronger than his ability to serve God and do right. This is a description of the battle that exists between me, the new man and the old man. “I” (the real me) delight in the law of God according to the inner man. In other words, in my heart and mind I desire to follow the leading of the inner man. I am *not* the inner man. I am *the person* (the “I”) who desires to follow the inner man. If the inner man and “me” were identical, this whole passage would be a farce.

Before we were saved, the “I” had no choice. The “I” served the old man. The “I” was completely wrapped up in the old man. The person wore the old man like a suit. Though they are *not* identical, they are inseparable. After we are born again, we have a choice as to which “man” we will put on. We have a choice as to which “man” we will yield to and obey. God begins to separate us from our flesh by giving us the choice to yield to the new nature. In Paul’s struggle, the “I” wants to choose the inner man or the new man. But there is another law (force) dwelling in him which declares war on the “I” that wants to do these things and that force brings that “I” into captivity to sin.

My point is this: There is a YOU that God is redeeming. There is a YOU that God is seeking to restore to His image. He’s not redeeming or restoring your “flesh” and He’s not replacing you with “Christ”. He is developing Christ *in* you. It’s not going to be a case where when God is finished, all there will be is Christ. The new creation God is bringing forth will not be *former* human beings who have been replaced by Christ. That’s the kind of thing you see in Science Fiction movies like *“The Invasion Of The Body Snatchers”*. The people in those films are gone; they no longer exist. They have been replaced by the creature that has taken their body.

That’s not what God is doing with us. The new creation God is bringing forth will still be YOU. But it will no longer be a fallen, sinful, self-willed, you. It will be a *Christ-filled* you. It will be Christ and man, joined together for all eternity. That’s the glory of this redemption. That’s the power of God—He’s *salvaging* a ruined creation, not replacing it. When you really get a revelation of what God is doing, it will make you weep with gratitude and joy!

There will always be a YOU who is responsible to choose righteousness, and there will always be a YOU who is capable of choosing righteousness. There will always be a YOU who will be held accountable for the things you do. Thus, there will always be a YOU who will be rewarded or punished.

While we’re looking at Romans chapter seven, now would be a good time to deal with the issue raised in Paul’s statement that in his flesh there dwells no good thing. As I said last week, Calvin took passages like this and said man is born totally depraved, that he cannot possibly desire righteousness or pursue or walk in righteousness. Neither can he respond to God or obey God.

Preachers wax eloquent over this statement of Paul. They say: *“See there, the Bible says there is no good thing in your flesh and that your flesh is God’s enemy. Your flesh cannot obey God and it will never obey Him.”* As a matter of fact, this is precisely what Mr. Lumbley said the other Sunday as he was reading through the first eight chapters of Romans from a paraphrase version of the Scripture. When he got to Romans 7:18, he paused to make the following statements:

“In your flesh, there’s nothing good. You have the will to do what’s right. That will is in you because of your new nature. In your new nature you want to do what’s right; but he says, I find no way to perform it. Meaning, in my flesh, there’s no way to perform what is right because **in my flesh dwells no good thing**. Now I’ve had people tell me that they believe that they made a decision in their flesh to walk away from some sin or to turn from some sin. I would respectfully say to that person: ‘No, you didn’t make that decision in your flesh because **your flesh is incapable of making those decisions. Your flesh will not obey God**. If you made that decision, it’s because **God worked the will in you to overcome your flesh and do that**.’”

Since this is Calvinistic error, I’d like to examine it. Remember, all Calvinists are convinced that the Adamic man does not have the desire or the will to do what’s right. So when Mr. Lumbley says we have the will to do what’s right, he’s only including believers. If you are not born again, you don’t have the will to do what’s right. This is why, after saying that we have a will to do what’s right, he adds: “*That will is in you because of your new nature*”.

In other words, you have the will to do what’s right, but the only reason you have a will that want’s to do right is because God has given you a new nature as a result of being born again. The only reason any person has the will or the desire to do what’s right is because God is *causing them* to have that desire through their new nature. If you didn’t have a new nature, you would never have a desire to do what’s right or the will to actually do it. In Calvin’s doctrine, every thought and desire of the Adamic man is only evil continually. So Mr. Lumbley says our new nature want’s to do good, but our flesh stops us from doing good because the flesh is *incapable* of doing good. Notice that he uses the term “incapable”. He’s imposing Calvin’s “Total Inability” theory on the statements of Paul.

Apparently someone who is listening to Mr. Lumbley was having a problem with his teaching because they told him they thought they have obeyed God “in the flesh” at certain times. In his rebuttal, he says the person didn’t really make that decision in their flesh because their flesh is incapable of making such decisions. Their flesh will never obey God, or even desire to obey God, because it’s incapable of desiring to obey God or of actually obeying Him. So if they made a decision to turn away from sin, it’s only because God planted that desire in them first, and then gave them the will to perform that desire.

In other words, it’s only because God caused them to turn away from that sin that they were able to turn away from it. And of course, this is precisely what he has been teaching for years. I mentioned this last week, when I asked the question: Did you ever have the “desire” to get rid of something in your life, or to stop engaging in some practice that you felt was displeasing to the Lord? Well, if the desire to get rid of that thing or stop engaging in that practice didn’t come from God, then according to Mr. Lumbley whatever you did was a “work of the flesh” and an attempt to “establish your own righteousness”.

God must be the cause of everything you do in the realm of righteousness and choosing good over evil for two reasons. First, because He doesn’t want you taking any credit for anything you do—that’s the ultimate heresy for a Calvinist. Second, you can’t possibly do what God isn’t causing you to do anyway. Why? Because according to Romans 7:18, you’re flesh is incapable of obeying God. There is no good thing in your flesh. It’s totally depraved. It’s totally incapable of desiring righteousness, pursuing righteousness, or walking in righteousness. It’s totally incapable of obeying God or even wanting to obey God.

If your brains are functioning right now, the question you should all be asking yourself is this—if it's not possible for the flesh to desire righteousness, or walk in righteousness, to desire to obey God, or to actually obey God, to desire to turn away from sin, or to actually turn away from sin because there is no good thing in it—then how is it possible to “establish your own righteousness”?

Isn't Mr. Lumbley's definition of establishing your own righteousness. . . *doing things by the power of the flesh*? Isn't Mr. Lumbley's definition of establishing your own righteousness. . . *obeying God with your own strength and ability*? Isn't Mr. Lumbley's definition of establishing your own righteousness. . . *doing something that isn't being caused by God*?

Dose anybody see a contradiction yet? According to him, any desire in you to do righteousness, to obey God, or to turn away from sin, must be coming from God because it can't possibly be coming from your flesh—your flesh is far too wicked to desire righteousness. Your flesh is far too wicked to desire to turn away from sin. There is no good thing in your flesh—it's totally depraved.

So then, if your flesh is totally depraved and totally incapable of either desiring anything good or doing anything good; if it's incapable of obeying God or even of desiring to obey God; how can you possibly establish your own righteousness? How can you actually do anything good when it's not possible for you to do anything good? How can you be *capable* of doing something and *incapable* of doing that same thing at the same time?

If we are incapable of obeying God with our flesh, then we are also incapable of establishing our own righteousness by obeying God with our flesh! If we are incapable of turning away from sin with our flesh, then we are also incapable of establishing our own righteousness by turning away from sin with our flesh! If we are incapable of doing anything good, then we are also incapable of establishing our own righteousness by doing anything good with our flesh!

You can't have it both ways. In order to establish our own righteousness, our FLESH must not only have the capacity to desire to obey God, it must also have the ability to obey Him. In order to establish your own righteousness, our FLESH must not only have the capacity to desire to turn away from sin, it must also have the ability to turn from sin. That's the only way we can establish our own righteousness.

So according to Calvin and Lumbley's own doctrine, it's impossible for us to actually establish our own righteousness. Mr. Lumbley's answer to such a glaring contradiction in his own doctrine would probably be to say that he never claimed it's possible to establish our own righteousness—only that we are always *attempting* to do so. The idea would be that the attempt to do so is never successful because if it were, the flesh would be able to do things it supposedly cannot possibly do. So then, the only answer to Calvin and Lumbley's contradiction is that it's only possible to “try” and establish your own righteousness. Well, I think brother Paul might argue that point:

*Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, **I more**: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the*

*church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, **not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:***

*Philippians 3:4-9*

Paul said if any man wants to boast about his own righteousness according to the “flesh”, he could out-boast the best of them. He had all the right credentials—circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews and a Pharisee. He said that concerning the “righteousness” that is in the Law, or that comes from obeying the Law, he was blameless. That’s a pretty heavy statement, my friends. That’s a pretty impressive testimony. Regarding obedience to the Law, he was *blameless*. His obedience was total. It was fanatical. This guy actually kept the Law—and in so doing, he established his own righteousness. However, he said he didn’t want to be found having his own righteousness. Rather, he wanted to be found having the righteousness of Christ.

But wait a minute! I thought it was impossible for us to actually establish our own righteousness. I thought the best we can do is “try” to establish it. I thought it was impossible for the “flesh” to even desire to obey God’s Law, let alone actually obey it! I thought it was impossible for the “flesh” to even desire to obtain and walk in righteousness, let alone lay hold of it and actually establish it! I thought it was impossible for the “flesh” to even desire to do good, let alone have the capacity to actually do good!

Was John Calvin reading the same Bible I am? Is Mr. Lumbley reading the same version I am? Does anyone in this room not understand what Paul is saying in this passage? Does anyone not understand he’s saying he established his own righteousness through his fanatical commitment and obedience to the Law, but that he traded that righteousness for the righteousness of Christ?

And by the way, if it’s possible to establish our own righteousness—which I think the Scripture makes clear that it is—then it’s possible for “the flesh” to obey God. It’s possible for the flesh to desire righteousness or to turn away from sin. And if it’s possible for the flesh to do these things, then guess what? The people who think it’s not possible for the flesh to do these things will say the Holy Spirit did them. So the very person who rages against trying to establish our own righteousness, is really encouraging people to establish their own righteousness! When the someone’s flesh obeys God or turns away from sin, Mr. Lumbley will assure them that it was not their flesh, but the work of the *Holy Spirit* who caused them to do what they did. Thus, he will deceive them and establish them in their own righteousness.

How does all this square with what Paul said back in Romans about there being no good thing in his flesh? Well, there are three possibilities. Option #1 is that Paul got a new revelation and changed his doctrine between Romans and Philippians ( a period of 4-6 years). Option #2 is that the our sinful nature is not actually our “flesh”, but the flesh is another entity. Option #3 is that Paul was comparing the fallen human nature—which has the ability to walk in human righteousness or human wickedness and depravity—to God’s righteousness. In other words, the “good” he was seeking to do at that point was no longer the good which Adam can obtain and manifest. The good he was seeking to perform was the good that *only Christ*

can obtain and manifest. The righteousness he was trying to walk in was not the *human* righteousness he had done so well at as Saul, the Pharisee. He has already proven and testified that he can perform HUMAN good and HUMAN righteousness better than anyone else. Now, after being saved, he's trying to perform DIVINE good and DIVINE righteousness—and that's a whole different story.

Divine good is so much more difficult to walk in and manifest than human good. Divine righteousness is so much more difficult to lay hold of than human righteousness. He was comparing the perfect righteousness of God with the sin-tainted righteousness of Adam. Compared to God's holiness, *nothing* is good. And as just a side thought, consider this. If it's possible to establish our own righteousness, if it's possible for the flesh to obey God or desire righteousness or turn away from sin,

I'm amazed at the inability of God's people, and even His ministers, to rightly divide the Word of Truth. It seems that so few of us have the capacity to stand back and see the bigger picture when reading the Scripture. For instance, if I asked you what the subject of the book of Romans was, how would you answer? If you said anything other than justification by faith, you would be incorrect. Except for the last five chapters of the book, which give practical exhortations regarding church duties, political duties and so forth, the entire book is about justification by faith.

Chapters *one* through *three* introduce the need for justification by faith for both the Jew and the Gentile, and give a brief statement of it. Chapter *four* shows Abraham as the example of justification by faith. Chapter *five* shows the results of justification by faith. Chapters *six* through *eight* deal with one of the objections the Jews would have had to the idea of being justified by faith—namely, that it promotes sin. Romans *nine* through *eleven* deal with another objection the Jews would have had to the idea of being justified by faith—namely, that it annuls God's promises (to the Jews). All the doctrine and the theology that's found in the book of Romans has to do with justification by faith.

How about the book of Galatians? What is the subject of the book of Galatians? It's the same—justification by faith. The Galatians had accepted Paul's gospel. But after Paul left that region, Jewish believers who were apparently teachers, had come into that assembly and tried to turn the people against Paul, and convince them that they needed to be circumcised (5.2-6; 6.12-15) and keep the ritual law (4.10) in order to be saved. In other words, they were telling them that justification was not by faith in Christ alone, but by faith *and* works. That is, by faith and by obedience to the Law.

When Paul discovered what was happening, he wrote them a letter, which is the book of Galatians. In this letter he tells the brethren that they have been justified (3.6-9), adopted (4.4-7), renewed (4.6; 6.15), and made God's heirs according to the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (3.15-18). Faith in Christ forever frees them from the need to *seek salvation* through the Law. His plea is that they not revert back to the principle of law-keeping as a means of salvation—that is, justification. The issue is *justification*. The term justification is used over and over again throughout the letter.

The problem with this congregation was that in the beginning, they believed they were *justified* by faith. But after coming under the influence of the Judaizers, they were being persuaded to be justified—or to be more precise, to keep their justification intact—through the works of the Law. The issue of this book is justification. The question that is being asked and answered is this: How are we *justified*? Are we justified by faith in Christ, or by obeying the Law?

I'll demonstrate why it's so important to understand the main subject of a book while reading it. Last week I exposed the counterfeit grace that Apostasy Watch is propagating. I untwisted the twist Mr. Lumbley puts on the truth that we cannot perfect ourselves in our own strength, or produce spiritual fruit by our own fleshly efforts. Since he is under the influence of Calvin's Total Inability error, he really believes all personal effort in the pursuit of righteousness or the battle against sin is an attempt to establish our own righteousness. He really believes that if you engage your will in the battle against sin, this is "will worship".

In an effort to make his position clear, he gave a message a few weeks ago entitled: "*Oh Foolish Galatians*". In that message, he tried to equate the *legalism* the Galatians were getting involved in, in order to keep their justification intact, with exerting personal effort in the sanctification process. He started out by saying he had no idea how "offensive" the message of the Cross was to the flesh:

"I never knew, I really did not know, how **offensive this teaching is to the flesh** until just recently. In the last couple of weeks I have come to find out just how offensive this message—and this is the message of the Cross, by the way—this is the message of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in allowing the Cross to do its work in your heart and in your life. And I'm finding out just how offensive this message is. So let me say, to start off here tonight, unequivocally, without any hesitation and without any grey area, let me say this, that **no amount of effort on your part will ever accomplish righteousness and holiness in your life**. None. **No amount of effort on your part will ever bring you to perfection or maturity in Christ Jesus**. Sanctification is a work of the Spirit in you. Now I can't make that any plainer. And I'm just going to tell you, that on that point **I will not be moved**. Some people are offended by that; and some people have departed from us because that is what I believe and what I preach. But **I will not be moved** on that point."

His position is very clear. No amount of effort on your part will ever accomplish righteousness and holiness in your life. No amount of effort on your part will ever bring you to perfection or maturity in Christ. He also said his view *is* the message of the Cross. He said that what he is preaching is the message of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in allowing the Cross to do its work in your heart and in your life. Well, I hate to break the news to him, but he's *not* preaching the Cross. He's preaching passivity. What he's really doing is preaching a counterfeit message of the Cross. He went on to say:

"Do you really think—do you really think that a man can be justified by grace through faith, but then sanctified **by his own efforts**? Do you really believe that? Can that possibly be? That **we're justified by faith** and grace, **but then it's our own efforts by which we are sanctified**? This is the very question that Paul addressed in the letter to the Galatians. O foolish Galatians; who has bewitched you? Who has bewitched you? Having begun in the Spirit are you now going to **be made perfect in the flesh**? Having begun in the Spirit, justified by the Spirit of God, are you now being **made perfect by your own efforts**?"

I wonder if anyone who was listening to him even questioned his assumption that "effort on your part" is the *antithesis* of faith. I wonder if any of them questioned his assumption that Paul was talking about sanctification in that passage. Mr. Lumbley constantly twists the Scripture to fit his own perverted view of faith and grace, yet most of the people accept what he says without question. It just goes to show you that leaving the Religious System doesn't make you any smarter than the ones who stayed. Nor will it

necessarily give you the spiritual discernment you don't have to begin with. The Judaizers who came into the Galatian congregation weren't telling those people they had to be circumcised to be SANCTIFIED! They were telling them they had to be circumcised in order to be JUSTIFIED. The issue was justification. Listen to what Paul said to these people over and over again:

*We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a man is **not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith** of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that **we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.** But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: **for if [imputed] righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.***

*Galatians 2:15-21*

*So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. **But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident:** for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.*

*Galatians 3:9-12*

*But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, **that we might be justified by faith.** But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

*Galatians 3:23-26*

*Behold, I Paul say unto you, **that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.** For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are **justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.***

*Galatians 5:2-4*

The issue for the Galatians was justification. They started out believing they were justified by faith. But now, they were accepting the idea that they had to be justified by faith *plus* obedience to the Law. Sanctification isn't even an in the book of Galatians. The issue throughout the book is justification. The "foolishness" of

the Galatians was not that they thought “a man can be justified by grace through faith, but then sanctified by his own efforts”. That’s the spin Mr. Lumbley is putting on the issue. He’s twisting Paul’s words to fit his error. The foolishness of the Galatians was that they had let Jewish legalists come into their fellowship and deceive them regarding how a man is justified. The issue was how a man is justified, not how a man is sanctified! They allowed these people to move them from their original belief system (ie: justification by faith), to another belief system (ie: justification by faith plus works).

After saying that personal effort is the antithesis of faith, Mr. Lumbley’s tried to apply logic and reason to the whole issue. The logic went like this—God is the one who had to save (justify) you to begin with. Your own effort did not and could not bring this about. In the end, God will be the one who has to save (glorify) your body. Your own effort won’t ever be able to bring this about. So if justification and glorification come by faith, then what makes you think sanctification is any different? You weren’t *justified* by your own effort and you can’t possibly be *glorified* by your own effort. So what makes you think you can be *sanctified* by your own effort?

At this point, we have to stop and clearly define the phrase “your own effort” because how you define that phrase will determine whether you are following the Scriptural message of the Cross or the counterfeit tat Apostasy Watch is propagating. If by “your own effort” Mr. Lumbley means an attempt to be sanctified *without* the help of God, then I would agree. But if by “your own effort” he is equating our *cooperation* with God as an attempt to be sanctified without His help, then I would disagree—and that’s exactly what he’s doing. He’s trying to equate the cooperation God Himself demands of us, as an attempt to become sanctified without God’s help.

I wish Mr. Lumbley would ask me if think I can be sanctified by my own efforts because I’d say “you betcha”—and I’m in good company too, because the Lord Mr. Lumbley claims to be serving exerted a lot of his own effort in the Garden of Gethsemene, in order to obey His Father. The Lord Mr. Lumbley claims to be serving exerted a lot of his own effort to overcome the temptation to sin. The Father didn’t remove the obstacle Jesus was facing that night by grace—which was the desire to have the cup pass from Him. Rather, He helped Jesus overcome that desire. He didn’t overcome it *for* Jesus. He gave Jesus the power to overcome it *Himself*. No, Jesus’ own effort didn’t win the victory, but it was required to win the victory! The Lord did the exact opposite of what Lumbley is preaching. So he can talk about the Cross all he likes—I’ll follow the example of the one who actually went to the Cross.

Now think for a minute: if God requires *our cooperation* in the salvation process, and if that cooperation *includes* “our own effort”, what kind of spirit would tell you over and over again that you must *never* exert personal effort? What kind of spirit would use the Scripture to convince you to do the very opposite of what God instructs you to do in His Word? It’s seducing spirits. Religious, seducing spirits. Quite frankly, it seems to me that Mr. Lumbley is so confused and deluded, he doesn’t even *understand* the issue. He keeps talking as if I’m encouraging people to try and be sanctified or go on to perfection *without* the help of God. He keeps talking as if I’m telling people they can produce spiritual fruit and come forth in the image of Christ *without* the help of the Spirit. Hello? Only a moron would think we could sanctify ourselves or reach perfection *without* God’s help.

As far as his logic is concerned, it’s the logic of a deceived mind. God never *justified* anyone who didn’t do *their part* in that process—even if that part was very, very small. We have to cooperate with God at

every level, including initial salvation. When God convicts us of our sins, we have a choice as to whether or not we will justify ourselves regarding those sins, or whether we will submit to the conviction and admit to ourselves and to God that what He is showing us is true, and that we are a sinner, and that we need a Savior. During this process, God isn't causing us or forcing us to make the right choice. The choice is our responsibility and our responsibility alone. That's our part—small though it may be.

Another book Mr. Lumbley frequently uses and twists to support his errors is the book of Romans. As I said, the subject of the book of Romans is justification by faith. Because justification is the issue, Paul emphasizes faith, particularly in chapter four. He's trying to get his audience to stop focusing on *doing* things in order to be made right with God and to accept the concept of justification *by faith*.

In chapter four, he uses the justification of Abraham to drive this point home. We can't be justified by keeping the Law or by being good. We can only be justified by believing God's word. We need to understand that God wasn't preaching the gospel to Abraham. Nor was he telling Abraham how to be "saved" from eternal torment. The issue of "sin" and "damnation" probably wasn't even part of Abraham's thought process. God gave Abraham a promise which included, but was not restricted to, having a son from his marriage to Sarah. That promise is what Abraham believed. He believed what God had told him. Because he believed what God had promised, God counted it to him as righteousness. Abraham wasn't saved by believing in the atonement of Jesus. He was saved simply by *believing the word of the Lord* regarding a future son.

This is the point Paul was trying to make in Romans chapter four. We are not saved by any kind of religious works or by being good. We are saved when we *believe the word of the Lord* concerning Jesus' death and resurrection. But the fact is, even though Abraham's belief saved him, it took *more* than belief to receive the promise. Here is where Paul stops short in the analogy—and there is nothing wrong with what he did. He had to stop short because the issue was justification, and if he talked about the need for Abraham to obey God in order to receive the promise, that would only cause confusion and the people would immediately revert back to their works-righteousness mentality.

You see, in order to be *justified*, all Abraham had to do was believe what the Lord promised him. But in order to actually receive the promise he was given, he had to obey God. I tried to bring this out in the message I did when I first exposed the deception of Apostasy Watch. I tried to show how, in his message, Mr. Lumbley was comparing apples and oranges. He was trying to equate Abraham believing that God would fulfill the promise to give him a son, with us overcoming sin simply by believing like Abraham did. That is a total mis-representation of the message of Paul in Romans four. It was Abraham's belief in God's promise that justified him. It was not Abraham's belief that brought the promise to pass. The Scripture says very clearly that the promise was brought to pass by Abraham's obedience.

*Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, **that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.***

*Genesis 18:18-19*

Look carefully at what is said in these verses of Scripture and you will see that Mr. Lumbley is using a half truth out of Romans chapter four to advance his Calvinistic view of sanctification. In Genesis chapter eighteen, God said: “*I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; [so] that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him*” In other words, it wasn’t just Abraham’s belief that produced the promise. It was also Abraham’s obedience, and the obedience he would instill into his children, that would allow God to give him what He had promised. Belief without obedience doesn’t work. God could not fulfill the promise to Abraham regardless of whether or not Abraham obeyed Him. Obedience was necessary if Abraham was to receive the promise.

Abraham had more than “belief”. He had faith—and faith *produces* obedience. That obedience is what brought about the fulfillment of the promise, just as much as his faith. No obedience—no fulfillment. Listen my friends, belief is not faith unless *obedience* is the result. Believing is not enough to receive any promise of God. Becoming fully convinced that God will fulfill His promise is not enough to receive any promise of God. Obedience must be present of the promise will never be fulfilled.

*And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; **Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.***

*Genesis 26:4-5*

In Genesis chapter 26, God told Abraham He was going to multiply his seed as the stars: because he obeyed Him, BECAUSE he obeyed Him! You can see the direct correlation between obedience to God and the fulfillment of the promise. To say that Abraham received the promise simply by believing God’s promise, or simply by becoming fully convinced that God would fulfill that promise, is a lie. Obedience to God was just as important and just as necessary to the fulfillment of that promise as believing.

Moreover, obedience is something *we* do. Obedience is not something God does for us. It’s not even possible for God to obey Himself *for* us. We are responsible to obey the Lord’s commandments. We are responsible to obey the Lord’s charge. We are responsible to obey the Lord’s statutes. We are responsible to obey the Lord’s laws. We are responsible to obey the Lord’s voice.

All this entails a lot more than “simply believing that what God promised, He is able to do”—as Mr. Lumbley says. This is a false faith, and he got that false faith from the “Word of Faith” cult. It’s quite ironic that the one who rails against following church formulas the most, is the very one who is continually propagating a formula for overcoming sin:

- 1. Abraham did not consider or think about what his body was telling him - he got his mind off the problem.*
- 2. He staggered not (refused to give up) at the promise of God*
- 3. He gave glory to God for the promised result - even before he saw it*
- 4. This caused his faith to grow and he became fully persuaded that God would perform the promise*

That's a faith formula, regardless of how much Mr. Lumbley denies it, and it came straight out of the Word of Faith cult. He relies on *this* formula for everything. He tells people it will get their financial needs met, it will heal their bodies, it will keep them out of deception, it will cause them to overcome sin, it will bring them forth in righteousness, etc. The answer for everything is to do what Abraham did. He believed God's promise; he clung to that promise till it was fulfilled; he eventually became fully persuaded that God would fulfill the promise and as a result, he gave glory to God for its fulfillment before it was fulfilled. It's all about believing. All you need is to believe.

You will notice the one thing that's missing from this formula is *obedience*. There's not a word in that formula about Abraham obeying God's voice. There's not a word in that formula about Abraham keeping God's charge. There's not a word in that formula about Abraham obeying God's commandments, statutes and laws. Well, guess what? Belief *without* obedience is the same as faith *without* works and Apostasy Watch is preaching a false faith.

Abraham received the promise because he believed *and* because he obeyed God. Even when Paul says that Abraham received the promise by faith, it's clear from the *rest* of the Scripture that Abraham's faith produced obedience to God, and that obedience was just as necessary to receive the promise. This is what Mr. Lumbley does all the time. Either he will twist a passage of Scripture to mean something it doesn't really mean, or he will present only half the picture or half the story. Paul said he gave the Ephesians the *whole* counsel of God's word (*Acts 20:27*). That's what a faithful minister of the gospel is supposed to do. But when you take what Paul said about Abraham in Romans, and *ignore* what God Himself said about Abraham in Genesis, you are not giving the people the whole counsel of God's word. You are giving them your perverted little version of God's Word.

Mr. Lumbley has adopted the "*Providential*" world view we discussed the other week. In the *Providential* world view, the only thing you are responsible to do is *believe* and *trust* in God's faithfulness. God does the rest. He keeps you from deception; He brings you forth in righteousness; He makes you overcome sin by removing all sinful desires from you. All you have to do is go through life like a little child, trusting that God is sovereignly in control of everything and that He is taking care of everything.

*I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, **my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;***

*Romans 9:1-4*

Well, let's talk about the "promises" God made to the nation of Israel for a moment. Please notice that promises were given to the Jewish race. They were given to Paul's kinsman "after the flesh". So according to doctrine of Apostasy Watch, all the Jews would have had to do to receive their promises is what Abraham did to receive his promise. They would simply have to believe that God would fulfill those promises; and become fully persuaded that He would fulfill them, and not give up believing that He would fulfill them, and give Him glory for fulfilling them before they were actually fulfilled.

*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, **We be Abraham's seed**, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?*

*John 8:31-33*

*I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. They answered and said unto him, **Abraham is our father**. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.*

*John 8:38-39*

Do the words of the Pharisees sound like the words of people who were *convinced* of the promises? They were convinced that they were Abraham's seed. They were convinced that they were the children of God. They were convinced that, as Paul said in Romans chapter two, they knew God's will; they approved the things that were essential; they were a guide to the blind and a light to those in darkness; and they were a corrector of the foolish and a teacher to the immature. I'd say these Jews were pretty confident that God was going to keep His promise to them, especially since they thought they were being so faithful to Him. But apparently, being convinced that God will keep His promise isn't good enough because even though they were convinced that He would, they were totally deceived and they missed the kingdom.

*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but [only] he that **doeth the will** of my Father which is in heaven.*

*Matthew 7:21*

*Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that **obey him**.*

*Hebrews 5:8-9*

*What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of **obedience unto righteousness**?*

*Romans 6:15-16*

Jesus said only those who *obey* God—not those who believe the promises of God—will enter the kingdom of heaven. The writer of Hebrews said Jesus is the author of eternal salvation to all the *obey* Him, not those who give glory to God before they see the promise manifested. Paul said that *obedience* produces righteousness. He didn't say believing the promises of God produces righteousness. Should we believe the promises of God? You bet we should. But believing those promises is *not enough* to receive them, any more than believing them was enough for Abraham to receive them, any more than believing them was enough for the nation of Israel to receive them. Obedience is *the key* to righteousness. Because Abraham

obeyed God, he received the promise. Because Jesus obeyed God, He became the Savior of mankind. Because a small portion of the Jews obeyed Jesus when He preached repentance to them, they became the first Christians.

If you have genuine faith, that faith will produce obedience to God and that obedience will produce actual righteousness. Belief is only one aspect of faith. Obedience is the *other* aspect of it. They are like two sides of the same coin. If one side is missing, then the coin is a counterfeit.

Obedience is an extremely vital issue because it produces righteousness and righteousness is the most important issue we face in this hour. Our place in the coming kingdom, our rewards, how much glory covers our glorified bodies, how much authority we have, what kind of responsibility we will have, everything depends on *the measure* of actual righteousness we have appropriated in this life. Everything depends on how much righteousness we own, on how much we can manifest and demonstrate.

Of course, some people would disagree with this view. The ones who would disagree are the ones who are caught up in a counterfeit “grace” and are part of the “grace plus nothing” crowd. They will disagree because they think they have already received *everything* salvation has to offer by grace. They think that receiving the imputed righteousness of Christ gives them a “package deal” which not only includes being saved, but also includes being kept saved (regardless of how they live) and receiving all the rewards mentioned in Scripture. They also assume *full* sanctification (ie: bearing 100-fold fruit; coming forth in the image of Jesus) is part of the package deal. Consequently, they don’t think they will ever have to *do* anything to appropriate actual righteousness. They think that somehow, some way—most likely after they get to heaven, or maybe during the trip—God will zap them with His magic wand and poof, they will have actual righteousness. They will *be* holy.

The doctrine Apostasy Watch is propagating is slightly different, but not much, from the doctrine the “grace plus nothing” crowd propagates. Whereas the grace plus nothing crowd assumes that *full* sanctification *cannot* be experienced in this life—we have to wait till we get to heaven to experience it—Apostasy Watch teaches that full sanctification *is* available *now*. We don’t have to wait till we get to heaven to be fully sanctified. But both Apostasy Watch and the “grace plus nothing” crowd preach the same Calvinistic lie that “*it’s all of God and none of you*”.

All who accept this lie and put it into practice will be disappointed when they stand before the Lord. Whatever fate they face, one thing is for certain: they will not be an overcomer. They will have completely missed the High Calling and they will not rule over the saved nations with the Lord in the next age. It’s a shame to watch so many people get picked off by the enemy after they have left the religious System, but we are all making our place in the coming kingdom by the *choices* we make every day.

So make your choices wisely, my friends.