

“A Right Standard”
Romans 10:3
(Preached at Trinity, January 24, 2010)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we entered **Chapter 10** we once again caught a glimpse of Paul's heart. Paul truly had a heart for lost people. He wept for them. He said in **Chapter 9**, "That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart."
2. He prayed for the Jews continually. They had been blessed of God above all people. Paul described their blessings:
Romans 9:4-5 – "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; ⁵ Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ *came*. . ."
3. In spite of their rich heritage and wonderful blessings they turned their back on God's blessing of Christ and continued in unbelief.
At the end of **Chapter 9** Paul shares why the Jews were continuing in unbelief. It is because they were seeking acceptance before God through their own righteousness. This perfect righteous demanded by God alluded them. Why? Because they did not seek it through faith in the righteousness of Christ.
Romans 9:31-32 – "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. ³² Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law."
4. It wasn't that the Jews did not have an interest in righteousness. They did! In fact they labored hard for it and thought their efforts were paying off. They were proud of their efforts. They saw God's gift of Christ as foolishness. Jesus was a stumbling block to them. He was offensive to them.
5. In **Verse 3** Paul describes this conflict of righteousness further.
Romans 10:3 – "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."
6. This subject of righteousness is of great importance. It is an important word running through the Book of Romans. The word "righteousness" is found 39 times, three times in this verse. But we must be aware; Paul is not referring to the same type of righteousness in each case.
7. You cannot understand the Book of Romans unless you understand clearly this word. Indeed you cannot understand the Bible unless you clearly understand this word, and you have to be precise.
Many people do not like the precision of Theology. They say doctrine bores them, leaves them dry. They like precision in other areas:
 - They want their bank to be precise.

- They want their doctor to be precise. Can you imagine going to a doctor and he writes you a prescription and you ask how much to take and he says, whatever you'd like. You ask what it's for and he says, "Tell me again why you're here?"
 - They want their airline pilot to be precise. We've all heard about the pilots that missed the airport by several hundred miles because they were using their laptops.
 - They want the brakes on their car to be precise – to stop each time, every time. It is a matter of life and death.
8. Being precise in your Theology is of great importance – it too is a matter of life and death.
When we are talking about righteousness we are talking primarily about a legal standing before God – the condition acceptable to God. You must be precise here. Most people are not.
9. The problem with the lost man is he doesn't understand what true righteousness is. His problem is he uses the wrong standard.
Standards are important. They are all around us – and again we want precision.
- A. There are standards with regards to weights and measures.
When I fill up with gas I want each gallon to be a standard gallon. There are laws that govern this standard.
When I buy a pound of sugar I expect the weight to be accurate.
The Bible commands accuracy with regard to weights and measures.
- B. Because we have a standard measurement for a mile and standard measurements for time we can accurately calculate speed by miles per hour. You want the standard to be correct if you are being written a ticket for speeding.
10. The problem with regard to righteousness is most people have established their own standard and then they try to live up that that standard.
In reality there are only two standards:
The standard man sets for himself and the standard God sets.
11. This morning I want to direct your attention to these two standards. May God enable us to examine these two standards openly and precisely. Remember, precision is indeed a matter of life and death.
- I. The standard set by man – “going about to establish their own righteousness”
- A. The lost man uses himself as the ultimate standard
1. He sets his own standards
- a. This is what Adam and Eve did in the garden – They decided to eat of the forbidden tree setting their own standard
Genesis 3:6 – “And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.”
- b. This is also what they did after they had sinned
They decided their nakedness was wrong and they decided the solution
Genesis 3:7 – “And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.”

- c. This was the story of Cain. He decided the type sacrifice to offer. He also decided that he had no responsibility for the welfare of his brother.
Genesis 4:9 – “And the LORD said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: *Am I my brother's keeper?*”
- d. This is what Paul was doing on the Road to Damascus. Destroying Christians as an act of righteousness
- 2. Every sin is a declaration of our moral autonomy
Because each man sets a different standard there is in essence no standard
- 3. This is the problem with this world – it is a world of lawlessness
Judges 21:25 – “In those days *there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes.*”
- 4. This is the nature of self-righteousness. Every man decides for himself what is necessary to make him right before God.
This is the problem with the mere religious man.
 - a. He is blind to his terrible condition.
 - b. He goes about trying to live according to his feeble standard
He lives according to a vain system of morality – don’t drink, don’t smoke, don’t listen to rock n’ roll. Go to church, carry a Bible.
But if you challenge him with God’s holiness he becomes angry.
- 5. His religious actions are all just vain efforts to cover over his true defilement
Isaiah 64:6 – “But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all **our** righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”
Literally it refers to menstruation towels.
- 6. Such vain efforts of righteousness have terrible consequences
- B. First, self-righteousness tends to make us critical of others
 - 1. As we set our standard of righteousness we begin to condemn others who don’t meet our standard.
 - a. It’s an easy thing to make man our standard. Since we see nothing but failure we feel pretty good about ourselves
 - b. This is what happens when you don’t have an absolute standard
 - 2. Have you ever fallen into this trap? Have you ever criticized others?
 - a. Do you see this behavior as a cloaked self-righteousness?
People seldom do. We feel justified in criticizing others.
 - b. Jesus condemned this sharply
Luke 6:41 – “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”
Matthew 7:1-2 – “Judge not, that ye be not judged. ² For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

- c. This isn't an absolute prohibition against all judgment. It is a prohibition against judging men according to our standard instead of God's standard while refusing to judge ourselves according to God's standard.

John 7:24 – “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

- C. Second, self-righteousness hardens us towards Christ and the Gospel
 - 1. If we are satisfied with our own lives and our own efforts we'll have little need for the Gospel
 - 2. This was precisely the problem with the Jews of Paul's day
Romans 9:31-32 – “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. ³² Wherefore? Because *they sought it* not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;”
 - 3. The very presence of Christ condemns us because He sets forth God's righteousness. Why was Jesus so despised? Because He was perfect. His form of righteousness was unattainable.
The Gospel lays our wickedness before us and declares all of our self-effort worthless.
 - 4. This is why people despise the Gospel. It threatens their comfortable lives.
- D. Third, self-righteousness swallows us up in pride
 - 1. The self-righteous man actually believes he deserves good things from God
 - 2. He gets angry when he doesn't get what he feels he is due
 - 3. On the Day of Judgment he will complain loudly.

II. The other standard is God's standard

Romans 10:3 – “For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”

- A. The problem lies with an ignorance of the character of God
 - 1. If you miss understanding God's holiness you will miss everything else
Charles Hodge – “Those who err essentially here, err fatally; and those who are right here, cannot be wrong as to other necessary truths.”
 - 2. God's perfections are infinite
 - 3. Isaiah saw Him as holy, holy, holy
Isaiah 6:3 – “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.”
 - 4. Moses was commanded to remove his shoes for even dirt in the presence of God is holy
 - 5. Nothing is so terrible upon the earth that to look at it will kill you
This is the way it is with God. No one can look into the full majesty of God and live.
Exodus 33:20 – “And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.”

6. God sets Himself as the standard of holiness
1 Peter 1:15-16 – “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”
- B. God’s standard for men is His Law –
1. The “righteousness of God” points to His moral perfection. For human beings it is manifested in God’s Law
 God’s standard of righteousness is His Law. His standard of judgment is His Law.
 2. Just as God is holy, His Law is holy
Romans 7:12 – “Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”
 3. This is God’s standard of judgment – He demands perfection
James 2:10 – “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one *point*, he is guilty of all.”
 4. This drives us to see our need of Christ
Romans 3:23 – “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;”
- C. The righteousness of God also points to the justification of God in Christ
1. God’s standard is the Law but we can’t keep it. Our efforts will always be found wanting.
 2. We need the righteousness that comes from God – righteousness in Christ.
Philippians 3:9 – “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:”
 3. This is the righteousness of God as revealed in the Gospel. This alone is the power of God unto salvation.
Romans 1:17 – “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”
 4. The Jewish people had turned their back on this true righteousness. Instead of embracing the truth they continued in ignorance.

Conclusion:

1. Which type of righteousness are you trusting in? What is your hope of being accepted on the Day of Judgment?
2. The Jews had rejected the righteousness of God in favor of their own righteousness. They were zealous in it. Zeal alone is not enough. Sincerity is not enough. Religion is not enough.
 Augustine: “It is better to limp in the right way than to run with all our might out of the way.”
3. The righteousness of God can only come through Christ. He alone has kept the Law perfectly. We need His righteousness.
1 Corinthians 1:30 – “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:”