

# Romans

August 23, 2009

This is the fourth in our series of studies on the Book of Romans.

**Title: “Without Excuse”**

**Romans 1:18-32**

We concluded the last study by reading the dialog from The Pilgrims Progress between *Christian* and *Ignorance*. You will recall that while *Ignorance* believed the **facts** about Jesus and His vicarious death for sinners; that *Ignorance* could not accept that it was **only** the personal righteousness of Jesus that God accounted as justifying righteousness. *Ignorance* would not believe that God did not accept **his agreement** with the facts about Jesus *and* his **obedience** as the ground for his justification!

**The Theme of the Letter**

**1:16-17**

“For I am not ashamed of **the gospel of Christ**, for it is the **power** of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it {the Gospel} the **righteousness of God** is **revealed** from faith to faith {first to last}; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ “ Romans 1:16-17

This is a difficult lesson to teach. Why do I say that? Because there is no encouragement here for anyone who rejects what God’s Word says about these things. But if we are to be faithful messengers of the Word of God we must try to be like Paul who says in Acts 20:27:

***“For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.”***

This morning we will be discussing the **Doctrine of the Wrath of God**. Romans 1:16-17 has no meaning if you do not associate the Gospel good news with the wrath of God.

As we begin this lesson in our series on the Book of Romans, it is important to make something very clear. We are living in a society that has declared virtually all moral judgements to be inappropriate. “What right have you,” they ask, “to impose your moral values on someone else?”

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People who say that are declaring that they have the right to impose their lack of moral values on others. So we are expected to accept “gay marriages” and “homosexual ministers,” and churches that want to be considered Christian and yet they endorse and encourage the homosexual agenda. Will there be “Christian” churches for child molesters?

Why not? Who decides?

How do you respond to a friend or to your child who says, I know someone who is gay. He is one of the the nicest people that I know. Doesn't he have the right to choose his lifestyle? Besides, he says he was born that way. He can't help it if he is “gay?”

Let me recommend an approach to use when you have the opportunity to discuss religion, abortion, homosexuality, or any other sensitive and controversial issue.

Begin by acknowledging that each of us has a belief system. We have a way of deciding right and wrong. It is called your “world-view.” We each have our **epistemology**. That is the theory of knowledge. How do you **know** what you know? “Well,” you say, “I just know it!” But based on what? How do you test what you hear or read to be true or false? What is the truth?

Contradictory statements of “truth” cannot both be true!

My belief, my “world view” is that God has given us the Bible which is His Word in written form. I believe that the Bible is fully inspired {plenary}, inerrant {without error}, and infallible {will not lead you to error}. We may differ on how to interpret certain passages of Scripture. Wait until we get to Chapter 11 and verse 26. Who is the “all Israel” that will be saved?

If we are to have meaningful dialog, we have to agree that the Bible is Truth. “Well,” you may say, “The Bible is true but it is out of date. What was true 2000 or 3000 years ago cannot possibly have relevance in these modern times.” That is exactly the thinking that Jesus was confronted with in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:17-18

**17** "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. **18** For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.  
NKJV

The Bible is the word of God and is therefore necessarily true.  
That is my **epistemology**.

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Therefore, as we discuss what Romans Chapter One says about ungodliness and unrighteousness, especially homosexuality, I am declaring that what the Bible says is the truth. It is always the truth. You are free to disbelieve what the Bible says. But if you are an honest person you need to honestly question the basis of your belief system.

How do you know what you know? What is your **epistemology**?

\* \* \* \* \*

That said, we will look at Chapter One, verses 18-32.

### **The Wrath of God Upon the Pagan World. {1:18-32}**

There are degrees of biblical exposition.  
We studied the 25 verses of Jude for eight months.

And to be completely honest, Brother Gables graciously corrected my understanding of Jude 14-15.

<sup>14</sup> Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, <sup>15</sup> to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."

It was my belief that Jude was referring to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Brother Jim convinced me that Jude was referring to the certainty of judgment and was quoting Deut 33:1-2

Now this *is* the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. <sup>2</sup> And he said:

"The LORD came from Sinai,  
And dawned on them from Seir;  
He shone forth from Mount Paran,  
And He came with ten thousands of saints;  
From His right hand  
*Came* a fiery law for them.

Donald Gray Barnhouse preached the Book of Romans for 10 years.

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones preached 5 sermons on verse 18.

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My objective is to deal with sections and themes and sometimes deal with specific words and how they are translated.

That means that some passages will require more exposition than some other passages.

“For ... {Because} .... the wrath of God is revealed....”

The doctrine of the **Wrath of God** or the **Doctrine of Condemnation**.

John 3:35-36

<sup>35</sup> The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand. <sup>36</sup> He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

**God’s wrath is His “settled indignation” against sinners.**

**Paul refers to the wrath of God ten times in the Book of Romans.**

Many people reject this attribute of God and say it is incompatible with the **love of God**.

But let’s define our terms. What is an attribute of God?  
A distinctive feature that serves to describe God.

It is not correct to say, “God is like ....” God is not “like” anything!  
God is ....!

Brother Bob Bunger’s message “A Dictionary Word” John 1:1 was excellent to show that God is not like anything, but many things may be like God.

God is: Holy, Solitary, Mercy, Grace, Immutable, Omniscient,  
Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Sovereign, Faithful,  
Long-suffering, **Love**, and yes, **God is Wrath**.

Do not imagine that the attributes of God are in conflict.  
God’s **love** and His **wrath** are based on His justice and holiness.  
God’s wrath is personal, though never emotional.  
God’s wrath is not uncontrolled rage as we think of man’s wrath.  
God’s wrath is His **settled indignation against sin!**

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It is popular to say, “God hates the sin, but loves the sinner.”

I suspect the intent of that saying is to “protect” God. After all, how could a loving God hate anyone?

The problem with that slogan is that you can’t separate the sin from the sinner! Sin is not an abstract idea disassociated from man. Dogs do not sin because dogs were not created in the image of God. Dogs do not have moral accountability. But men do.

You and I will give an account to God for every thought and every deed.

Does it trouble you to hear me say, “God hates individuals?” Why?

Do not assign this lesson to other people.

Every one of us either has been or now is an object of the wrath of God!

You will have to wait until Chapter Nine for more exposition of how God hates individuals.

### **Vs 18 For the wrath of God has been revealed..**

If you will not accept the revelation of the **wrath of God** in vs 18, you cannot be consistent and accept the revelation of the **righteousness of God** in vs. 17. You can’t believe vs. 17 without believing vs. 18.

You can’t just go through the Bible and choose what you agree with and reject other parts. You may think you can, but you will learn too late that God will not allow you to challenge His truth.

Paul’s argument is that because all people are under the wrath of God, therefore all need the Gospel. As we develop our exposition, we will see that Paul is saying:  
the Gentiles {the pagan world} are under the wrath of God {1:18-32};  
the wrath of God is upon the Jews {2:1 -3:8};  
indeed the wrath of God is upon the whole world {3:9-20}.

**The Gospel is the Lord Jesus Christ.** The Gospel deals with the righteousness of God as it is revealed in the Scripture. But the Gospel is pointless to the person who does not understand that he is by nature **ungodly**, and that all of his deeds are **unrighteous**, and that he is personally an object of the **wrath of God!**

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A person may accept a proposition, as did *Ignorance*, but the Gospel is not “Good News” unless you believe you are justly condemned by a holy God!

This passage tells us:

**Sin is deliberate:** {19-21; 28} Everyone knows that God is a divine nature.

The atheist? Vs. 20      But we do what we know is wrong anyway.

**Sin is inexcusable:** {32} We know that God is; we know right from wrong; we know there is judgment; and we are without excuse.

**We are perverted within.** In our affections, none of us do everything listed here. But some of us do some of all of them. Or, at the least we endorse the unrighteousness of others. We enjoy sit-coms that promote the homosexual agenda, soap operas where we have vicarious adulterous sex; movies, etc. And I said “WE!”

**We are perverted without.** Because our thoughts are wrong, our actions are wrong.

Compare what is **revealed** in vs. 17 and vs. 18.

**This is awesome! Revelation!**

Remember what *Ignorance* said to *Hopeful* in Pilgrim's Progress:

*Hope.* Ask him if ever he had Christ **revealed** to him from Heaven?

*Ignor.* What! You are a man for **Revelations!** {Ignorance jangles\* with them.} I believe that what both you and all the rest of you say about that matter, is but the fruit of distracted brains.

*Hope.* Why man! Christ is so hid in God from the natural apprehensions of all Flesh, that he cannot by any man be savingly known unless God the Father reveals him to them.      \* jangles: irritate the nerves by discordant sound.

*Ignor.* That is your Faith, but not mine; yet have not in my head so many Whimsies as you.

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We should mention that there are here, in these two verses, two kinds of revelation.

There is the **general revelation** of the truth of the divine nature in creation. This revelation of God is not for salvation, but it is sufficient to make all men without excuse.

Then there is the **special revelation** of the Gospel unto salvation.

Matthew 11:25-30

<sup>25</sup> At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from *the* wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. <sup>26</sup> Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. <sup>27</sup> All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and *the one* to whom the Son wills to reveal *Him*. <sup>28</sup> Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light."

**Wrath** is being revealed, present tense, on-going; vs. 24-32 show **how** wrath is revealed.

The sinner is given over to his vices and misery.

Wrath is revealed in the **conscience**. All of us have an innate sense of right and wrong {Chapter 2}.

We learn to dull our conscience. We harden our hearts as did Pharaoh. Our conscience becomes seared through repeated acts of unrighteousness.

Wrath is revealed in **nature**: thorns and thistles, the fear of man in animals.

The proof of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden is when a dog barks at a man.

Wrath is revealed in God's allowing men and women to **live in rebellion** against Him. Unless God shows them mercy, they will reap the harvest of their rebellion.

And more than anything else, the wrath of God is revealed in the **death of the Son of God**. If ever there was a time that God would excuse sin and not punish it, it would have to be when His dear Son was made to be sin.

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Verse 18 ...ungodliness and unrighteousness...

“**Ungodliness**” is irreverence, impiety, perversity of a religious nature.

“**Unrighteousness**” is a lack of a right attitude and right conduct.  
Wicked thoughts and deeds.

The **order** here is very important.  
Ungodliness is the **cause** and unrighteousness is the **effect**.

Much of what is called evangelism today fails because it treats the symptom instead of the disease. It deals with unrighteousness and does not address the cause, which is ungodliness.

If you can persuade a man or woman, especially very young people, to “Accept Jesus as their personal Savior,” and the Holy Spirit has not convinced them of their ungodliness, they may be deluded into a false profession of faith. Without Holy Spirit conviction of guilt and condemnation there is no real sense of the need for a Savior.

Where is repentance?

Unless you are convinced of your **ungodliness**, you will not see your need for the righteousness of Jesus.

The ungodly “Suppress” or “hold down” the truth by wicked lives, they resist, hinder, stifle, repress and thwart the truth, especially that which may be known of God, vs 25.

Notice that they **know** the truth of God. This is not the Truth as we commonly use the term to refer to the Gospel. But this is the knowledge of deity, the divine nature, the Creator. And men hold that truth down!

Verses 19-23 **The grounds for the wrath of God.**

The wrath of God is right and just, even against those who will never hear the Gospel.

How is this so? God reveals Himself to all men, vs 19-20; and man rejects that revelation, 21-23.



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The pagan world is not condemned for failure to live up to a revelation that they **do not have**, i.e., the Gospel; but they fail in receiving the revelation that they **do have!**

They reject that which is known.

Vs 20 Inexcusable ignorance; God has always revealed His existence and power.

“Godhead” is not the best translation because that term refers to the Trinity. The better translation is “divine nature.”

The evolutionist, e.g., rejects all the evidence of **design** in creation and believes in **chance**. There is no evidence for evolution, all the evidence in nature points to intelligent design, yet the evolutionist holds down the truth. He suppresses {holds down} the truth that may be known in unrighteousness.

An excerpt from my message on Amos:

“His regular employment was that of a shepherd; but he also had the delicate skill as a “dresser of sycamore fruit.” The sycamore fig has a natural bitterness that renders it uneatable. The dresser wounds the bark of the tree at the time of budding to allow the exudation of a milky fluid. Later the fruit is “combed” to allow a specific wasp to escape before it destroyed the fruit.”

Now I believe that God put Amos’ occupation in the inspired record, not only to show that God uses modest and simple men, but Amos, as a “tender of sycamore fruit” introduces an incredible fact of nature that only can be explained by divine creation.

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That statement about a “specific” wasp caught my attention so I looked up the fig wasp, *also called **fig insect***, in the Encyclopædia Britannica.

“The fig wasp; any of about 900 species of tiny wasps responsible for pollinating the world's 900 species of figs. Each species of wasp pollinates only one species of fig, and each fig species has its own wasp species to pollinate it. This extraordinary diversity of co-evolution between figs and wasps has become so profound that neither organism can exist without the other.”

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- “The life cycle of the fig wasp (family Agaonidae).

“The fig wasp's life cycle is typified in the caprifig (*Ficus carica sylvestris*), a wild, inedible fig. Wasps mature from eggs deposited inside the flowering structure of the fig, called the syconium, which looks very much like a fruit. Inside the completely enclosed syconium are the individual flowers themselves. When a wasp egg is deposited in one of the flowers, that flower develops a gall-like structure instead of a seed. The blind, wingless male wasps emerge from the galls and search out one or more galls containing a female, and upon finding one, he chews a hole in the gall and mates with her before she has even hatched. In many cases, the male then digs an escape tunnel for the female. The male then dies, having spent its entire life within the fig. The female emerges later from her gall and proceeds toward the escape tunnel or the eye of the fig (the part opposite the stem end), because she must deposit her eggs in a second fig. In departing, she passes by many male flowers and emerges covered with pollen. During her brief adult life (as short as two days), she flies into the forest to fertilize another fig and deposit another generation of fig wasps.

“The female fig wasp's role in pollinating certain edible figs, especially Smyrna figs (*F. carica*), is critical to the fig grower, as most economically valuable figs require fertilization to ripen. Though she cannot lay her eggs within the edible fig (she must lay them at the base of the pistil, and the pistils of cultivated figs are longer than her ovipositor), she carries with her the pollen that fertilizes the figs and causes them to ripen. Unfertilized females perform the same role in pollination.”

"fig wasp." Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica 2009 Multimedia Edition. Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, 2009.

Let's repeat that first paragraph from Britannica:

“The fig wasp; any of about 900 species of tiny wasps responsible for pollinating the world's 900 species of figs. Each species of wasp pollinates only one species of fig, and each fig species has its own wasp species to pollinate it. This extraordinary diversity of co-evolution between figs and wasps has become so profound that neither organism can exist without the other.”

Did you hear that? “**Co-evolution**”! I may not be the brightest bulb on the tree, but I didn't just fall off of a turnip truck either. How can any intelligent person look at the co-dependence of the 900 species of tiny wasps each with its specific species of fig and still hold to evolution?

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“This extraordinary diversity of **co-evolution** between figs and wasps has become so profound that neither organism can exist without the other.”

Psalm 2:4

He who sits in the heavens shall laugh;  
The LORD shall hold them in derision.

The context of Psalm 2 is how the LORD views those who join forces against His Anointed who is Jesus Christ. What is evolution if it is not organized rebellion against Christ as the Creator?

John 1:1-3

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.<sup>2</sup> The same was in the beginning with God.

<sup>3</sup> All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

Colossians 1:16-20

<sup>16</sup> For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

<sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

<sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

<sup>19</sup> For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

<sup>20</sup> And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

So when I read about “specific wasps” for “specific figs” with 900 species of each that had to “co-evolve” I take my place with “He who sits in the heavens...” and laugh at the **insanity** of those who believe in “evolution”.

Please do not miss the enormity of the belief that **random chance** [evolution by definition is random chance plus vast ages of time] can occur at least 900 times and produce a “specific wasp” for a “specific fig”!

By accident! There can be no intelligent design in evolution; only random chance! No wonder the evolutionists are confounded!

End of excerpt from Amos.

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Anyone who believes in evolution is an intellectual fool, and is without excuse!

Vs 21-23 The downward regression, due to **ingratitude**, refusing to worship their Creator.

**Insolence:** claiming to be wise without God, they become fools instead.

**Idolatry:** they exchange the glory of God for idols fashioned to look like men, birds, animals, and snakes.

“Modern man” no longer worships wood and stone images. They worship themselves. They put self and comfort before God. It is my contention that abortion is idolatry, worship of self.

Vs 24-32 The execution of God’s wrath.

v 24, God gave them up...

v 26, God gave them up...

v 28, God gave them over...

**“Sounds like clods of earth falling on a coffin.”**

vs 24-25 God withdraws all restraint:

Lesbianism and male homosexuality.

Abandoned to uncleanness; lust after and desire the forbidden; impurity; sexual aberration.

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

**The final stage in man’s downward spiral into moral decay is to rebel against his very own nature.**

Can a lesbian or male homosexual be saved? Of course, but they must agree with the Word of God and repent of their wicked lifestyle.

vs 26-27 Abandoned to passions of dishonor;

given over to vile passions; similar to 24-25, but worse.

Such unutterable impurity brings its own punishment.

AIDS is a terrible disease.

But it could be virtually eliminated by a change in behavior.

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vs 28-31 Incorrigibility.  
They embrace wickedness.

Abandoned to a reprobate\* mind.

A mind incapable of making moral distinctions.

This list of iniquities is terrible to read.

Charles Alexander calls it the "Catalog of Sins."

### \*REPROBATE

(rep'-ro-bat): This word occurs in the English Bible in the following passages: [Jer 6:30](#) (the Revised Version (British and American) "refuse"); [Rom 1:28](#); [2 Cor 13:5-7](#); [2 Tim 3:8](#); [Titus 1:16](#). In all these cases the Greek has *adokimos*. The same Greek word, however, is found with other renderings in [Isa 1:22](#) ("dross"); [Prov 25:4](#) ("dross"); [1 Cor 9:27](#) ("castaway," the Revised Version (British and American) "rejected"). The primary meaning of *adokimos* is "not-received," "not-acknowledged." This is applied to precious metals or money, in the sense of "not-current," to which, however, the connotation "not-genuine" easily attaches itself. It is also applied to persons who do not or ought not to receive honor or recognition. This purely negative conception frequently passes over into the positive one of that which is or ought to be rejected, either by God or men. Of the above passages [1 Cor 9:27](#) uses the word in this meaning. Probably [Rom 1:28](#), "God gave them up unto a reprobate mind" must be explained on the same principle: the nous of the idolatrous heathen is permitted by God to fall into such extreme forms of evil as to meet with the universal rejection and reprobation of men. Wettstein's interpretation, "an unfit mind," i.e. incapable of properly performing its function of moral discrimination, has no linguistic warrant, and obliterates the wordplay between "they refused to have God in their knowledge (*ouk edokimasan*)," and "God gave them up to a reprobate (= unacknowledged, *adokimos*) mind." Even [Titus 1:16](#), "unto every good work reprobate," affords no instance of the meaning unfit, but belongs to the following rubric.

The close phonetic resemblance and etymological affinity of *dokimos* to the verb *dokimazo*, "to try," "test," has caused the notion of "being tested," "tried," and its opposite of "being found wanting in the test" to associate itself more or less distinctly with the adjectives *dokimos* and *adokimos*. Thus the more complex meaning results of that which is acknowledged or rejected, because it has approved or not approved itself in testing. This connotation is present in [2 Cor 13:5-7](#); [2 Tim 3:8](#); [Titus 1:16](#); [Heb 6:8](#). In the first two of these passages the word is used of Christians who ostensibly were in the true faith, but either hypothetically or actually are represented as having failed to meet the test. "Reprobate unto

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every good work" ([Titus 1:16](#)) are they who by their life have disappointed the expectation of good works. The "reprobate (rejected) land" of [Heb 6:8](#) is land that by bearing thorns and thistles has failed to meet the test of the husband man. It should be noticed, however, that *adokimos*, even in these cases, always retains the meaning of rejection because of failure in trial; compare in the last-named passage: "rejected and nigh unto cursing."

LITERATURE. – Cremer, *Biblich-theologisches Worterbuch der neutestamentlichen Gracitat* (10), 356-57. **GEERHARDUS VOS**

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vs 32 They endorse wickedness.  
They publish newspapers and TV shows that endorse the "gay" agenda.

"Who....," i.e., those of such nature are justly condemned.  
Do you find it difficult to condemn the homosexual lifestyle?  
Do you agree it is genetic and not a deliberate choice?

I began by saying that this is a difficult lesson to teach because there is no encouragement here for someone who rejects what God's Word says about these things. But if we are to be faithful messengers of the Word of God we must try to be like Paul who says in Acts 20:27:

"For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

**The encouragement** is that God is merciful and He is revealing the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ.

Do you need the righteousness God?  
Cry out for it, "What must I do to be saved?"  
Repent and believe the Gospel.

Are you convicted of ungodliness and unrighteousness?  
Do you want the righteousness of God?  
Do you want to trust Jesus Christ?

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The next lesson:

The Wrath of God Upon the Jew {2:1-3:8}

After establishing the Gentiles' need for the righteousness of God in the Gospel of Christ; Paul turns to the Jew, the moral person, and shows that they too have failed to attain a righteousness that is acceptable to God.