

August 28, 2011

## IGNORANT OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Romans 10: 1-4

**As you** already know, the subject of "God's Righteousness" is all encompassing. **Obviously**, I won't be trying to exhaust this vitally important matter, but just cover a few things for us to consider.

**We will** be looking at the context of these verses later. **Let's** begin with the verse my title is taken from.

**Look** at 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.**"

**The** THEY here is National Israel, (Paul's kinsmen in the flesh). **He is** not describing lawless and immoral people here. **But**, rather, some of the most zealous, moral, religious people that ever walked the earth.

**So**, this is a Spiritual issue. I.e. **This** is an "ignorance" that has eternal implications. **Sinners** cannot afford to go on in this "ignorance".

**And**, although Paul is writing about National Israel, the "ignorance" he is describing of them applies to all of us by nature. **As we** are born into this world and even as we begin our religious lives, **ALL** are "ignorant of God's righteousness". **We ALL** have to be taught on this issue. **And**, God has to teach us. **As we** will see in the lesson, we learn of this VITAL knowledge ONLY when God brings us to His Gospel.

**And**, let's talk about "ignorance" a little bit. "**Ignorance**" is never having heard. **That** is one KIND of "ignorance". **If you** have never heard of something, you are (of course) "ignorant" of it. You are "ignorant" because you never heard.

**There** was time when I had never heard the term "imputed righteousness". **At that** time I was "ignorant" of that term and "ignorant" of that doctrine. **Not** having heard is one KIND of "ignorance".

**But**, then, there is another KIND of "ignorance". **There** is the "ignorance" of having heard (with the physical ear), but not agreeing with, not embracing, or (as the text says) not "submitting" to what you have heard. **The** ear might have

ōlistenedö. **But** if the heart is not embracing and the will is not responding, there is no SUBMISSION. **This** is also a KIND of òignoranceö. **“Ignorance”** is anything short of embracing and submitting to what you have heard.

**Christ** ended many of his parables with this statement, **“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”** I.e. **He** that has been given understanding, let him embrace; let him SUBMIT to the truth he has heard. **Don’t** listen and then go on as you were before you heard. **Let** the truth change your thinking.

**NOT** to do this is to remain òignorantö. **It is** be (willfully) òignorantö. **It is** (willful) rejection of (even rebellion against) what you have heard and understood. **To** react to *“God’s Righteousness”* THIS way is to be òignorantö of the VALUE God (Himself) puts on His Righteousness. **It is** to fail to see what place this òRighteousnessö holds in Godø salvation.

**Next**, (exactly) what is *“God’s Righteousness”*? **For** that scriptural definition, we will look at Romans 3: 21-22.

**But**, to get the context of that passage, we will begin at Romans 3: 19,  
**“Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”**

**The** law òspeaksö. **Who** does it òspeakö to? **It** speaks òto them who are under the lawö. **Who** is that? **Who** is **“under the law”**?

**ANY** sinner seeking to gain or maintain their acceptance with God through their obedience to law is **“under the law”**.

**ANY** sinner òfollowing after the law for righteousnessö like National Israel did is **“under the law”**.

**ANY** sinner who imagines that ANYTHING found in them forms any part of the CAUSE or GROUND of God saving them or keeping is **“under the law”**. **This** includes those who see òfaithö (their òbelievingö) making the difference between saved and lost. **Sinners** who think anything IN THEM is making up any part of the difference between saved and lost are making that òthingö a òdeed of lawö, and are, therefore, **“under the law”**.

ANY sinner NOT finding all their acceptance with God in His Righteousness is “**under the law**”. I.e. ANY sinner who is **“ignorant of God's righteousness”** is “**under the law**”.

Which means, ALL of us by nature (without exception) are “**under the law**”.

ALL start out “**under the law**” and remain there until God graciously delivers us. UNTIL a sinner sees Christ “putting away” the sin of EVERY sinner He died for and “bringing in” Righteousness by His obedience unto death, and EVERY sinner IN HIM declared righteous based on His righteousness imputed, UNTIL then, that sinner is “**under the law**”.

The law “speaks” to those who are “**under the law**”. What does the law say to those “**under it**”? What does it say to those trying to work out their acceptance with God through their obedience? What does the law say to those who think that their “faith”, or their “repentance”, or their “good works” is the CAUSE of God saving them or keeping them saved.

The law says, “This is God’s Standard: Love God supremely and your neighbor as yourself. That is God’s Standard. Be ye therefore PERFECT”.

And, man’s response to that STRICT Standard is: “Nobody can do that.” To which the law replies, NEVERTHELESS, “That is God’s Standard.” Men protest. But, the law never changes its tune. The law is unrelenting. “If you want to be accepted BY ME, then, DO what I say.”

And, Why? Why does the law continue to lift up God’s Standard of PERFECTION? It does so “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”

The law never stops lifting up God’s Standard in order that the “mouths” of men be “stopped” from “justifying” themselves by their obedience to the law. The law never stops lifting up God’s Standard in order that sinners might see themselves “guilty” before God, GUILTY based EVEN on their best obedience.

Now, sinners who don’t see this, never see a NEED for a righteousness outside themselves. They don’t see a NEED for a righteousness they have NO PART in producing or maintaining. They never see a NEED for “God’s Righteousness”. And, they don’t see this NEED because they “think” they have a righteousness of their own making.

**Now**, look at verse 20, **“Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.”**

**The law** reveals to us God’s strict and inflexible STANDARD. **When** we judge by (that) STANDARD, we see how short we come. **I.e.** We see our “exceeding sinfulness”. **“Moreover the law entered that sin might abound...”**

**To those** who see the law aright and the “exceeding sinfulness” it reveals in us all, the question must come, **“Then, where is the hope?”** **If the law** is THAT demanding and we are THAT sinful, **“How can any be saved?”**

**Now**, look at Romans 3: 21-22 for the definition of *“God’s Righteousness”*.

**“But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;**

**22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference.”**

**The** word “manifested” means, “set in a clear light”. **NOW**, can refer to this present age. **NOW** that the Mosaic Law has been fulfilled and abolished by way of fulfillment. **I.e. NOW**, in this Gospel age. **NOW** *“the righteousness of God”* is “manifested”. **NOW**, it is being “set in a clear light”.

**But**, **NOW** might also be referring to the condition of the heart (of a sinner prepared by God). **NOW**, that the law has done its work in a sinner’s heart. **NOW**, that its STRICT Standard is being seen aright. **NOW**, that our “exceeding” sinfulness has been exposed by the law. **NOW**, that our NEED for a righteousness OUTSIDE OURSELVES is being “clearly” made known. **NOW**, this “righteousness” is “manifested”. **That** which we did not see (or need) at all BEFORE now, is NOW being “set in a clear light”.

**What** (exactly) is *“the Righteousness of God”*? **FIRST**, it is **“without the law”**. **I.e.** It is WITHOUT a SINNER’S obedience to the law. **God** has graciously provided a Righteousness for fallen humanity that is totally outside sinners. **It is** a Righteousness that is totally exclusive of a sinner’s obedience, reformation and effort.

**SECOND**, “*God’s Righteousness*” is **õwitnessed by the law and the prophets**”. The Mosaic law set forth this Righteousness in picture and type. The High Priest of Israel was one chosen by God and approved for his office. The sacrifice offered was SPECIFIC (without spot or blemish). **And** the prophets proclaimed it to those of their generations.

**And**, third, “*God’s Righteousness*” is **õby faith** (by the faithfulness) **of Jesus Christ**”. It is by Christ’s õfaithfulnessö to õfinish the workö His Father gave Him to do. It is by Christ’s õfaithfulnessö to õgive Himself a ransom for manyö. It is by Christ’s õfaithfulnessö to be õmade under the law to redeem them that were under the lawö. It is by Christ (the Shepherd’s) õfaithfulness to lay down His life for the sheepö. The “*Righteousness of God*” is by the õfaithfulnessö of Jesus Christ. It is NOT by the õfaithfulnessö of sinful men. Nor is it by the õfaithö of sinful men, nor by anything found IN sinful men.

**Bottom line:** õThe Righteousness of Godö is what Christ did in His life and in His death that makes it RIGHT for God to be merciful to a chosen multitude of sinners who have done nothing to DESERVE and nothing to OBTAIN His mercy.

**And**, õGod’s Righteousnessö (the One provided by God and worked in the body and soul or Christ) is the BASIS (THE ground) for God blessing a sinner (the ONLY basis, the ONLY ground).

**God** shows mercy to a sinner BECAUSE He has chosen to (õI will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.ö). **Christ** has fulfilled all the requirements and met all the conditions that make it RIGHT/JUST for God to show that mercy.

**I think** you can see that being “*ignorant of God’s Righteousness*” is a SERIOUS matter; one that needs to be dealt with. **Today**, I want us to consider three (serious) implications to being õignorant of God’s Righteousness”. The sinner (any) who is “*ignorant of God’s Righteousness*” is:

1. **Not** õhearingö the Gospel.
2. **Giving** no evidence of salvation.
3. **“Going** aboutö to establish a righteousness of their own.

**First**, the sinner who is “*ignorant of God’s Righteousness*” is NOT õhearingö the Gospel.

Look at Romans 1:16-17, “**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**

**17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”**

**What** makes the Gospel, THE Gospel? **Someone** said at last count there were 2600 different denominations in religion. **That** is 2600 DIFFERENT groups with 2600 DIFFERENT messages. **But**, there is only ONE Gospel. **What** distinguishes THE Gospel from the other 2599 OTHER messages?

**Only ONE** thing does that. **Therein is the righteousness of God revealed.”**

**The** righteousness of God is the HEART of EVERY Gospel message. **This** is so true that where you don't hear it, you have NOT heard the Gospel. **You** might have heard a lot of truth (true facts). **But**, if how God is Just to Justify ungodly sinners by the imputed Righteousness of Christ ALONE is missing, it is NOT the Gospel.

**Christ** sent His disciples into the world to preach THE Gospel because THE Gospel ALONE tells sinners about Christ, about His Righteousness, about God's glory in saving sinners for Christ's sake alone.

**The** Gospel ALWAYS reveals the righteousness of God. **So**, for a sinner to have listened to a Gospel message or even be sitting under the sound of that Gospel week in and week out, but to remain ignorant of God's Righteousness means that sinner is not hearing what is being said. That sinner is not hearing what is being emphasized. **That** sinner is not embracing (not SUBMITTING to) what is being declared.

**Sinners** who are ignorant of God's Righteousness are not hearing the Gospel. **And**, such sinners are declaring their lostness. **They** are giving EVIDENCE of their need to be saved, which brings us to our next point.

**Any** sinner who is “*ignorant of God's Righteousness*” is giving no evidence that they are among the saved.

Look again at Romans 1: 16, ð“**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.**”

**Remember** what makes the Gospel THE Gospel, (ð**therein is the righteousness of God revealed**”). The same thing makes The Gospel “**the power of God unto salvation**”.

The sinner who is not ðhearingö the Gospel with an ear of DISCERNMENT; the sinner who is not ðhearingö the Gospel with an attitude of SUBMISSION is a sinner giving NO EVIDENCE of salvation. The Gospel ALONE reveals “*the Righteousness of God*”. Therefore, the Gospel ALONE ðis *the power of God unto salvation*”. The Gospel ALONE is God’s MEANS of salvation.

**Ignorance** of “*God’s Righteousness*” (which includes not being submitted) equates to a need for salvation.

**That** is the context of the first part of Romans 10. **Paul** begins this chapter with an earnest desire for the salvation of his kinsmen in the flesh.

Look at Romans 10: 1-2, “**Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.**”

**2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”**

**They** are zealous toward God. **They** are sincere and dedicated. **They** are religious. **Yet**, in all the zeal, in all their sincerity and dedication, in all their religion, they are STILL in need of salvation. **Note:** The MAIN reason they need salvation is NOT their immorality, or lack of religion, or lack of zeal. The MAIN reason they need salvation is because they are ðignorant of God’s Righteousnessö. The MAIN reason they need salvation is because they are “**going about to establish their own righteousness**”. The MAIN reason they need salvation is they have “**not submitted themselves unto the Righteousness of God**”.

**That** brings us to the third (and final) implication of a sinner who is “*ignorant of God’s righteousness*”: they are “*going about to establish their own righteousness*”.

**Look again at 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.”**

**Sinners** “*ignorant of God's righteousness*” need to be õsavedö. **What** do they need to be saved from? **They** need to be õsavedö from their own self-righteousness. **They** need to be õsavedö from trying to work out their own acceptance with God.

**They** need to be saved from NOT “*submitting themselves unto the righteousness of God*”.

**Christ** spoke a parable to some of His day that illustrates well the mind of those who are “*ignorant of God's Righteousness*”. **In this** parable we can see those who are looking WITHIN THEMSELVES for righteousness.

**Look** at Luke 18: 9, “**And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:**

**He** spoke to “**certain**”. **He is** speaking to those in any generation who are finding righteousness within themselves.

**Look** at verse 10, õ**Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican.**”

**The** contrast is between the most õesteemedö religious leader (obviously saved) and the most õdespisedö tax collector (obviously lost).

**Look** at verses 11-12, õ**The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.**

**12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.**

**Although** he Pharisee gives God the credit, he reveals what he thinks is making up his righteousness (not like other men/verse 12).

**Look** at verse 13, õ**And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.**”



**Unlike** the Pharisee, the publican has NOTHING to offer God. **He** finds NOTHING in himself that would recommend him to God. **He** acknowledges that his ONLY HOPE is to find ömercyö in God's sight.

**Look** at verse 14, **“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”**

**Nobody** reading this parable wants to relate himself to the Pharisee. The Pharisee is self-righteous. **He** is proud. **He** is judgmental. **He** exalted himself. **He** went away öunjustifiedö.

**All** would rather be related to the publican. **He** is humble. **He** abased himself. **He** sees his need for ömercyö. **He** went away öjustifiedö.

**But**, in reality all of us by nature are like the Pharisee. **Before** God brings any sinner to the Gospel, that sinner is finding his/her righteousness WITHIN themselves (in their religion/in their zeal/ in their moral, upright life/ in their öfaithö).

**The** problem with all this is that (in our ölostnessö) we don't SEE ourselves finding our righteousness WITHIN. **The** deception of the mind is we are looking to Christ. **But**, the reality in the heart is that something IN US is making the (real) difference between saved and lost. **Christ** died! ..BUT!

**UNTIL** God brings us to His Gospel, wherein öthe righteousness of God is revealedö, **UNTIL** He shows us that Christ has put away the sin of EVERY sinner He died; **UNTIL** he makes us know that by His obedience unto death Christ has established the ONE Righteousness based upon which God justifies the ungodly; **UNTIL** we are sure that salvation is in God imputing that Righteousness to our accounts, **UNTIL** then, we don't know God. **We** don't know Christ. **We** don't know that we need TO BE saved.

**And**, we don't know what we need to be saved FROM. **We** don't know that we need to be saved from our ögoing about to establish our own righteousnessö. **We** don't know that we need to be saved from NOT being SUBMITTED to “*God's Righteousness*”.

**Being** ignorant of God's Righteousness is a (major) problem. **What** is the solution to this problem? **What** is the solution to this ignorance? **What** is the solution to this lostness? **What** is the solution to sinners going about to establish their own righteousness?

**Christ ALONE** is the solution. **Christ** crucified and risen again is the **ONLY** answer to being ignorant of God's Righteousness.

**Look** at Romans 10: 4, **“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.”**

**Christ** is the end (the fulfilling) of the law for righteousness in two ways. **FIRST**, He is the fulfillment of the law.

**Look** at Matt 5: 17-18,” **Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.**

**18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”**

**Christ** fulfilled ALL the law's requirements in PRECEPT and in PENALTY. **And**, by His work under the law, (His obedience unto death), He established the righteousness of God.

**SECOND**, Christ is **the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.”** In each generation Christ brings His sheep to submit to HIS Righteousness and repent of THEIR own righteousness (going about).

**In them** the righteousness God has provided and Christ has worked out, has its intended effect. **They** find the peace that Isaiah wrote about.

**Look** at Isaiah 32: 1, **“Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment.”** This chapter in Isaiah is about the reign of Christ over His Church.

**Then**, Isaiah 32: 17, **“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever.”**

**Christ** begins His reign over His Church in the hearts of His Sheep in Regeneration. **The PEACE** He has established for His people is made known in their hearts. **He** established PEACE. **And**, He brings each of His elect to rest in (that) PEACE.

**That** is where we find our ðquietnessö in a troubled world. **That** is where we find our ðassuranceö in the Righteousness He worked out for us and the Father has imputed to us.

**Well, Christ** crucified and risen again is God's solution. **Christ**, the LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS is God's solution.

**My** prayer is that God will bring YOU to Christ, to submit to HIS Righteousness, to repent of your own righteousness.

**May** God keep you; may He keep me from being ðignorant of God's Righteousnessö.

By **Mark Pannell**