

WHERE ARE THE NINE?

Jesus asked this question in Luke 17:11-19, "And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but **where are the nine?** There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."

Leprosy was a dreaded disease in that it was very painful and there was no cure. Note in verse 12, all ten were in need of healing physically as are all of us today in need of healing spiritually. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

In verses 11-13, they all went to Jesus; the only place any of us can go for hope. Acts 4:12 conveys this point, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Notice carefully in verse 13, they asked for mercy and not justice. Just as we today desire mercy in our sinful state rather than the justice we deserve. This is described in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Jesus tells them, in verse 14, to perform an act of obedient faith to receive healing. Just as we are today in Acts 2:38 we read, "... Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

Note in verse 15, only one of the ten returned to give thanks. Do we realize how blessed we really are to have hope in Jesus Christ? Do we take time to stop and give thanks to Jesus?

Jesus asked in verse 17, *"Where are the nine?"* Could they have been unthankful? In Romans 1:21 we read, *"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."* Could they have been filled with excuses as we sometimes are and as those in Luke 14:15-24? Could they have been as Demas who loved this present world, *"For Demas, having fallen in love with this present world, has abandoned me and has gone to Thessalonica"* (II Timothy 4:10)?

Just as there was no cure for leprosy in that day, there is no cure today for sin except through contact with the blood of Jesus Christ through faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. What about those of us that have been added to the church (Acts 2:47), are we one of the nine? Do we take time to give thanks for all of our blessings, especially our salvation? If not, we are one of the nine!

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APOLOGIA

QUESTION: How does the Gospel reveal the righteousness of God?

ANSWER: The apostle Paul in Romans 1:16-17 writes, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for the salvation of everyone who believes, of the Jew first and of the Greek as well. For in it God's righteousness is being revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, 'The righteous will live by faith.'"*

As stated above the Gospel is powerful. Its power is found in the fact that it is a revelation of God. The Gospel reveals both His wrath and His righteousness. By doing so, man is furnished with the truth about his true condition and what can be done about it.

The phrase "righteousness of God" can be understood in one of two ways. It can be used to describe the personal attribute of the righteousness that is possessed by God. When employed this way it has reference to God's own personal righteousness that is found in His nature. Just as God is love we can say that God is righteous.

There is also a second way that the term can be employed. It can refer to God's system of making man righteous. When utilized in

this manner it is describing the way God cleanses man from sin. In the passage mentioned above it is this definition that is under consideration. This is inferred by the connection between the Gospel and the power it possesses that is unto salvation.

The righteousness of God is a major theme in the book of Romans. Paul has as his focus man's need for righteousness and how it is obtained. In the first chapter Paul discusses the sinfulness of the Gentiles. In chapter two and most of chapter three, he discusses the sinfulness of the Jews. Since mankind was composed of either Jew or Gentile, Paul's conclusion is that all have sinned. In Romans 3:19, we read, *"Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."*

Note that He mentions, "All the world may be guilty before God." This means that all are sinners and have failed in glorifying God.

At this point, Paul begins to explain how the righteousness of God has been revealed. Keep in mind that we use the phrase in reference to how God justifies man or cleanses man from his sins. In short, how is man made righteous?

The first point made is that God makes us righteous apart from the law. One of the burning issues confronting the first century Church was the place of the law in the life of the Christian. The Jews were of the mindset that they were justified before God based on the merit of having received the law. If you happened to be a descendant of Abraham, were circumcised, and obedient to the law you were saved. This is the real reason that the nation of Israel rejected Jesus. They thought themselves justified by what they had already and that they were righteous because they were obedient to the law. They failed in seeing that the law was not designed to justify them but rather it was given that sin might be defined. Paul writes in Romans 3:20, *"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."*

This is also why the Jews saw the Gentiles as sinners. According to the Jews, the Gentiles did not receive the law and consequently were not justified in God's sight. One of the first major doctrinal disputes in the early Church was whether to make the Gentiles keep the law. There were certain ones who taught that the Gentiles must be circumcised and keepers of the law in order to be righteous.

Since the law was incapable of justifying man it was necessary that God justify mankind apart from the law. Romans 3:21 reads, *"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets..."*

In order for man to have been justified by the law, man would have to adhere to the law perfectly. Under a legal system perfect obedience is an absolute requirement for justification. To offend in one point would be to offend in all. Man was unable to keep the law perfectly. In fact, if he could then there would have been no need for the sacrifice of God's Son for sins. We would have justified ourselves by being perfect. Thus God had to justify us apart from the law.

Notice that the law itself witnessed this fact. Paul mentions that the "Law and the Prophets" demonstrated a need to for God to justify man rather than man justifying himself. In Hebrews 10:1-4, we read, *"For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin."*

There are two important points to note in the above passage. The first is that the very law they lived under provided for animal sacrifices to cover man's sin. The need of an animal sacrifice shows that perfect obedience was lacking. Man was inadequate. The sacrifices were for sins committed. The point being that sin was present.

The second point is that animal sacrifices themselves were not adequate to take away sin. They offered them year after year. If they (the animal sacrifices) were capable of taking away sin, thus perfecting those who made them, why were these sacrifices needed yearly?

The above points to the fact that man is made righteous apart from the law. The law witnesses God's righteousness but man is not justified by it. Now the question becomes, "If man is not justified by the ability to be good enough how is he justified?"

The answer is given in verse 21. Paul writes, *"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe."*

Here we find that God's system of justification by which He makes man righteous is by faith in Christ Jesus. This is why the Gospel is powerful and is able to make one wise unto salvation. It is not the law that saves nor is it man's ability to be good enough that justifies us. It is our obedience to the Gospel that saves us.

The Gospel demands faith. Faith has two components; the facts to be believed and the commands to be obeyed. In I Corinthians 15:1-4 we find the facts to believe. *"Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scripture."*

This was what Paul was making reference to in Romans 3:23-25, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, who God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith to demonstrate His righteousness..."*

The Gospel reveals the righteousness of God because it demands that we have faith in Christ. We must believe in Him or we will die in our sins. God sent Jesus as a sacrifice that was unlike the sacrifices made under the law in that it was able to justify man. Jesus was the sacrifice that made appeasement for the transgression of man against a holy God. This we must believe if we are to be justified by God.

In addition to these facts to believe we must also obey in order to receive the richness of His mercy. In Romans 6 we are told that we must obey from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered unto us. This involves going through a death, burial and resurrection. Paul writes, *"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."*

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with..." (Rom. 6:3-6).

From this discussion we have established that man is justified by the grace of God through faith. It is herein (the death of Christ and our response to it) that we are made righteous. We have learned that God saves those whose faith in Jesus leads them to obey His Word. Our obedience does not earn or merit salvation but rather receives the grace of God who has given Jesus as the propitiation for their sins.

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. According to Numbers, in case of war, who would serve as Israel's soldiers?
2. According to Proverbs, what did Solomon say was the beginning of knowledge?
3. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream about a tree which grew up into the heavens and then was cut down, what did Daniel tell the king that the tree symbolized?
4. In Acts, who were the first two apostles to be taken into custody?
5. What did Paul say was the body of Christ?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. According to Genesis, what was the first thing God said?
LET THERE BE LIGHT (Gen. 1:3)
2. What was the name of Ruth's first husband? MAHLON (Ruth 4:10)
3. Where were Joseph, Mary, and Jesus when King Herod died?
EGYPT (Matt. 2:19)

4. What associate of Paul's nearly died of an illness and then was sent to Philippi? EPAPHRODITUS (Phil. 2:25-30)
5. In Revelation, which of the seven seals revealed the souls of the martyrs? THE FIFTH SEAL (Rev. 6:9)

As we began the New Year we would like to thank those who have contributed to THE HARVESTER during this past year. First of all, we thank God for the gift of His Son and for the health and prosperity with which we have been blessed during 2006. We thank those contributing articles and those helping with the production and distribution of this publication. We thank the Sun Hill Road congregation for the mailing permit and help with the mailing list. We thank the congregations of Taylor's Cross Roads, West Broad Street, Gabelsville, and Napoleon for financial contributions. We thank the following individuals who have contributed financially during this past year: Dr. Drew Williams, Denson Dunlap, Carolyn Shelnutt, Winton Carson, Eunice Jared, Marie Strain, Edward and Margie Herren, J.P. Cook, and Fred and JoAnn Melton (in memory of Curtis Freeman). *"Now the God of peace be with you all"* (Rom. 15:33).