

Providence, Prayer and Praise the Lord pt 2

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Romans 10. It's been good to be in the house of the Lord already this morning. We're doing the second part of what I've entitled "Providence, Prayer and Praise the Lord," and exposition of Romans 10:1-4. Romans 10:1-4. We're concluding with verse 4 which is our verse over the baptistry, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

Let's read it altogether, though. Romans 10, beginning in verse 1. Paul writes to the church at Rome,

1 Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them [that's is brethren according to the flesh, Israel] is for their salvation. 2 For I testify about them that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. 3 For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.

Now, in the first part, we talked about I. Praying for conversions. After Paul finishes what we have as chapters 8 and 9, we organize the Bible into chapters, the original writers didn't but what we have as chapters 8 and 9, Paul gives the most exhaustive, thorough, no questions about it exposition, if you will, on the sovereignty of God in salvation that's anywhere found in Scripture. That God chooses, predestines and elects those he's going to save and he does this from the foundation of the world. Then right on the heels of that in Romans 10:1, he shows his passion for lost Israel and his prayer that God would save them and we talked about how these balance out, how that simply because God shows us his great perfect sovereignty in all things does not mean we are allowed to dabble in the private councils of God and decide who the elect are and who is God going to save. Our job is to preach the Gospel and urge all men everywhere to repent and believe. So we do believe in divine providence and we do believe in passionate even desperate prayer for the lost.

Secondly, II. We talk about blinded and deceived. He talks about his brethren, Israel, his brethren according to the flesh, that is, and he says, "They have a zeal for God but not in accordance with knowledge." So they had all of this learning about God from all of their

forefathers, they had the prophets and the writings, the ceremonies, the sacrificial system, all of these things that pointed them to God's promised Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, but they didn't get it. They were blinded and deceived. They literally could not see the forest for the trees. They saw the trees of all the things that were types and pictures of Christ but they couldn't put it together. They were blinded in the light.

But not only blinded in the light, we talked about Christianity as a teaching religion. He said, "they have a zeal for God," this is verse 2, "they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge," and that word there is epignosis. It's not the common word for knowledge, gnosis, which just means a simple intellectual grasp. They didn't have the heart changing, heart gripping, life changing knowledge of Jesus as Lord and as Savior. And knowledge is only gained through teaching and preaching and Christianity is foundationally a teaching and preaching religion. That's the primary thing we do. Now, we do other things. We expect it to have application certainly in our lives. We're not just about intellectualism but it starts with sound preaching. Then, of course, the true knowledge C. and that's the epignosis, "they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge," he says. They didn't have saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. As I've said to you before, do you think Jewish flesh is any different than Alabama flesh? We have the same thing in the Bible belt today. There are so very many that have a knowledge but not a true knowledge, not a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Now let's go to new material and we start here with III. Our righteousness in Christ. Our righteousness in Christ. Let me attempt to give you just a simple definition of righteousness and really the word "righteous" or "righteousness" is so easy to understand it may be hard to understand. Righteousness simply means being and doing what is truly right. Being truly right and doing what is truly right. You see, God is righteous because he's God and he sets the standard of right. Once again, you don't come up and say, "Now, these things right here, these listed are good and right things so God is like that." No, no, no, no. God is the standard. God is the definition of righteousness. He is the one who is truly right and the only right definition of right which is him. Is that too complex? You see, what he is and what he does defines what is right or what is righteousness. John 2:29 simply says, "He is righteous."

Now, let's talk about A in our outline: two types of righteousness. Two types of righteousness. Now, in effect, they're not really two types of righteousness because there can only be one true right and that's God himself. But for sake of illustration and understanding, the apostle is going to mention as if there are two types of righteousness. So first of all, it's man's righteousness and then there's God's righteousness. We'll talk about that in a moment.

He says here in verse 3, "For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own," that's man's righteousness, "they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." So man's righteousness could be defined as the attempt by man out of his own nature and strength to do right and to please the truly righteous God. Man's righteousness would be his effort, his attempt out of his own nature and strength to please and become righteous before God. So man looks in himself and grabs up all that

he can, all the strength that he can, all the virtue and goodness he thinks he is finding and he says, "I'm going to put all this to work with all of my might and I'm going to gain a right standing before the one truly righteous God." That's man's righteousness. Trying to do it out of his own strength and what's contained in his own nature.

Now, again, there is no such thing, really, as man's righteous, it's just a figure thrown out for illustration purposes because nobody is righteous but God. It's kind of like when Paul wrote to the Galatians. I get some encouragement by this because Paul planted this church in Galatia and he hadn't been gone long before false teachers came in and started messing everything up and so he writes this letter to the churches of the Galatia region to rebuke and correct the false teachers who brought in a false Gospel and he says, "After I left, some folks began preaching another gospel." Then Paul goes on and says, "Oh, and by the way, it's really not another gospel, just some people call it a gospel." For illustration sake, he said, "They're preaching another gospel but since it's not the true first gospel, it's not another at all. It's just something they made up that's false." Well, that's the way righteousness is here. There is only righteousness and that's God's but man does try in his thinking that he can somehow be righteous in his own nature, out of his own nature, rather, and in his own strength.

But, secondly, let's talk about God's righteousness. God's righteousness. Once again, let's look at the three aspects of God's righteousness. This is review because I want you to get this and I'll use it over and over until I die. First of all, God has mandatory righteousness. That means that God's righteousness by its very or essential nature mandates all of his creatures be righteous. God cannot be truly right and not require us to be truly right. Are you with me? The moment God says, "Okay, I'm going to lower it down for you guys," God becomes a sinner. Are you with me? He can't be truly righteous and mandate any less than true righteousness. So he has mandatory righteousness. You see, it's only fully right that he mandates righteousness out of all of his creatures. So there are no varying degrees of righteousness, at least not in the fullest, highest sense. There is only true righteousness which God defines and possesses and that's all he sees as allowable or acceptable before him. He mandates it.

Now, we have all heard probably something about a little bit of a scandal around the last Super Bowl football game. The quarterback for one of the teams supposedly had the footballs deflated in some cold, cold weather because he could grip it better and throw it better and the reason why he's in trouble for that is that because the New England Patriots don't have their own standards for inflation on the football and the Seattle Sea Hawks don't have their own standard for how do you inflate a football and the Denver Broncos don't have their own standard for how much pressure per square inch must be in a football. The NFL central office mandates the standard and everybody else has got to reach that standard or you are, when it comes to inflation of footballs, unrighteous. You have fallen short of the standard because there is only one standard in the central office. All the teams have to live up to that standard.

Well, God not only has mandatory righteousness, of course, God also has punitive righteousness. In other words, being as right as he is, being fully and truly right, then

every aspect of man's being and conduct that is less than what God says is truly right must be and will be punished. God's righteousness mandates the punishment for all unrighteousness. God's very essence, God's very nature is righteous and demands all unrighteousness is justly punished and when he punishes all that fall short of his true standard of righteousness, he punishes unrighteousness righteously. Here's what I mean by that: his punishment is perfect and without prejudice or partiality. When he punishes all that's not right, it's perfect in the way he does it. Now sometimes, well, sometimes, just about all the time down here on the earth, when we think about what's right and what's just and we hear all this equality and fairness talk today and when we think about that, "Well, that seems right. That seems fair. That seems right." Well, here's what happens: we don't understand God's standard. God's perfect standard of righteousness is so superior to ours sometimes we think he's harsh and too hard but he's not. He's perfect. We just fall so below we don't get it.

Revelation 19:12 says, "His eyes are a flame of fire." The flame of fire has two ideas, it means he sees everything. Nothing will go unpunished. All that is not right about you when compared to his infinite righteousness will be punished. And also they are a flame of fire because it emphasizes he will burn away all facades. You can take your baptismal certificate and put it right up to God and God would say, "What is that?" Poof, burn it up. He'll say, "I'm looking for one thing, the righteousness of my Son Jesus Christ." All your works, all your religion, all your efforts, all your Bible study pins, hallelujah, it ain't going to matter if he doesn't see Jesus. He mandates a punishment. He has punitive righteousness for all unrighteousness. He alone has the authority to judge. That's why Revelation 19:12 says not only are his eyes a flame of fire, "on His head are many diadems." The word in the Greek there means "royalty and majesty." Only he has that authority. Revelation 19:2 says that, "His judgments are true and they are righteous." His punitive righteousness is righteously administered.

Thirdly, mandatory righteousness, punitive righteousness, hallelujah for redemptive righteousness. Redemptive righteousness and that is that God made a choice in love to provide righteousness for completely unrighteous sinners. God made a choice. Why does God do that? All of this nonsense today about everyone has their fair chance to come to Jesus Christ; God is fair about everything. God is not fair, God is just. God, though in love chose to give as a gift his righteousness to totally unrighteous, unworthy sinners, that's redemptive righteousness. In other words, when God chose that he would save unworthy sinners like us, he did it in the perfect right way. He's righteous in the way he saves unrighteous sinners.

1 John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Wow. Do you know how much unrighteousness you have? Do you know why these fellows and girls are going to stand down here tonight and sing about the attributes of God? Because they need to know how righteous God is so they need to know how badly they need to be forgiven and saved. And you need to know. As a matter of fact, these children are going to sing more good, sound Bible doctrine tonight than some of you have learned in Baptist churches in 40 years and that is not an exaggeration. So when you get saved, you're not sure what the big deal is, you're pretty

good and okay anyway. No, you're not pretty good and okay. You're terribly deficient but God chose in his rightness of redeeming, the right way to redeem, to give as a gift righteousness to unrighteous sinners. Now, the Bible has so very, very much to say about righteousness. If you look up the word "righteousness" you'll find it all through especially Paul's epistles, so much so, if you miss what the Bible says about righteousness, you've missed the Bible.

Well, A in our outline we talked about two types of righteousness. B, let's talk about the empty hope of man's righteousness. The empty hope of man's righteousness. Man believes that somehow through religion and ritual and morally cleaning up his life, doing some ethical or upright stuff, that he might gain this righteousness before God but that hope is bankrupt. That hope is empty. In verse 3, notice what he says about his Jewish brethren, "For not knowing about God's righteousness," and here's the phrase, "and seeking to establish their own." They didn't know about God's righteousness. They didn't get it, that is. They didn't understand God has mandatory righteousness. They didn't understand God's punitive righteousness. And they certainly did not understand his redemptive righteousness, that he alone has a right way to redeem and save men so they function and this is Israel, but now this is common to our friends in the Shoals and everywhere else too, they have this wholly bankrupt notion that through a series of maybe religious ceremonies, rituals, good works, they can somehow gain or attain a righteous standing before a holy God.

Now, years and years and years ago when computers first came up or were first coming out, I don't know if they still use this in programming circles but they had a little phrase that said "garbage in/garbage out." Have y'all heard that? Garbage in/garbage out, and what they meant was if you programmed that thing wrong, you've put in garbage and every time you go to use it, you're not going to get anything helpful back out because it's your fault, you programmed it wrong. It's programmed wrong. Let's say you bought a new smartphone and somehow the guy at the factory, maybe maliciously, programmed everything wrong. It's just corrupted in every part. You can get out that smartphone and try to work on your schedule but your schedule doesn't come out right. You can look at your calendar but the calendar is all messed up. You can listen to the music but the music doesn't come out right. You set the alarm but it didn't go off right, it's messing up all the time. You can go to the note page, the note page doesn't work. You try to send an email or text, it's all messed up. Do you know why? Because garbage in/garbage out. It was programmed wrong and everything is corrupted so only corruption will come out.

That's where man is. That's where man is. We were born with a fallen nature, foreign and as the enemies of God. We were born, the Bible says, in sin, "For in sin did my mother conceive me." When I was a one-celled human being in the womb of my mother, I had the nature of self-centeredness and self-love, not God-centeredness and God-love and if left to myself, I would come into this world, I'd put on a bunch of religion some men taught me and feel good about what I had done but I wouldn't be right because garbage was programmed into me from conception and only garbage can come out. Sin has corrupted the totality of man's being and that's where he is. So due to sin, every part of my being is programmed in unrighteousness and no matter how hard I try to be right

before God, I fail. Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." You fall short of being right as God wants right to be. You fall short in every way, shape or fashion and everything you out of your own nature and strength try to do.

Paul said, "That's where my brethren according to the flesh are." Verse 3 of Romans 10, they did not know about God's righteousness. Now, when Paul says that phrase "they did not know about God's righteousness" he's not saying they did not know the correct formula or the correct religious duties or the correct religious rituals they needed to go through to get this thing. That's not what he's saying. What it means is they didn't comprehend two very important things. Are you listening? When he says they didn't know about God's righteousness, he said they didn't get these two things: 1. They did not get that the only righteousness God accepts is God's righteousness. They didn't get that. I mean, boy, those Jews, like some of our friends in the Shoals today in different denominations today, they thought, "Man, if we go to the temple, if we bring the sacrifices, we do the cleansings, if we give the tithes and offerings, if we observe the festivals, if we're not drinking and smoking and cussing and chewing, this works after works, if we can get all that right, then somehow we're going to be right." No, they did not understand that the only righteousness God accepts is God's righteousness.

God is not going to sit on his throne in the final judgment and say to folks, "Oh, all right. You tried some so I'm going to lower the standard of what righteousness is." But you've got to understand something, folks: people, they don't really say it but they apply it a lot in their preaching and what they're actually saying is God is saying, "I'm going to stop being God." To lower his standard, he has to stop being God. To lower what righteousness is, he has to change who he is. By the way, he has immutability. He cannot change. He is who he is. So he's not going to say, "All right, I'm going to lower the standard." No! What he will say is, "Depart from me. I never knew you." So when Paul says they didn't understand the righteousness of God, 1. Paul is saying: they didn't get it that the only righteousness God accepts is God's righteousness. How in the world are you going to make it to heaven if the only righteousness God accepts is God's righteousness? I know some of you too well. You're not righteous like God. As a matter of fact, I don't know one of you that's righteous like God and I'm not either but that's the only righteousness God accepts.

Number 2, the second thing they didn't get: that God has a means to give men his own righteousness through his Son Jesus Christ. They didn't get that, that God does have a provision to give people his own righteousness through his Son Jesus Christ. So he says there in verse 3 that they didn't understand the righteousness of God and "seeking to establish their own." We've covered that: all the stuff men do and have done in myriads of religions through myriads of decades and centuries trying to be righteous in their own strength and ability and nature.

Then he says in verse 3, "they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God." In other words, they didn't repent and reject the silly, bankrupt, empty hope they had in doing ceremonies and rituals and works. He said they didn't get it. They didn't reject and repent of hoping in stuff they did through their religion and turn and receive Christ in

faith as their only hope of being righteous before God. He said they didn't do that because that's the way God has ordained righteousness to come about. They did not subject themselves. It just means they did not take themselves out from under the old system and place themselves by faith under God through Jesus Christ. Friends, that's what being born again is. That's what being converted is. That's what being saved is. You reject all of the notions of how you're going to please God and you abandon yourself in faith only to Jesus as your only hope.

Romans 4:5, what a great cross-reference verse this is, "But to the one who does not work," not work, not work through the ceremonies of religion, not work through rituals of religion, not work through good works your religion teaches, "but," in the place of that, that is, "but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly." Woo! Who is he justifying? Not good folks who think they've cleaned up, who think they've washed up, who think they've put on religion, who think they're doing better, who are treating their wives better, who are loving their husbands better. No! That's your righteousness. You come as the ungodly in faith and God in his grace through the merits of his Son Jesus Christ justifies you, the ungodly. Ungodly are justified and called righteous in the presence of the ultimate, just, holy and righteous God.

How can that be? I need to tell you about somebody, his name is Jesus Christ. He's the one who makes it happen. That's why we love him so. That's why we treasure him so. That's why we worship him so. That's why we adore him so. And that's why we work in this local church because this church is his body and he's worth it. He has done too much for me. Like the African American pastor said on the tv the other day, he said, "I've come too far to quit now." I've come too far to quit now. I'm tasting and seeing all he has done for me. He justifies the ungodly. You'd better be happy about that. You'd better be happy he says, "I justify those who bing, bing, bing, bing." Now, if you've got a bing, bing, bing, bing, you've got to do this, this, this and not do that and that and that, you're going to blow it. But what a wonderful phrase. I about preached myself out of breath.

He justifies the ungodly. That means there's hope for you. There's hope for you guys all the way over here on the edge because he justifies the ungodly. There is hope for you guys way right back there on the back. There is hope for you all the way over here on the right. Keep moving to the right, by the way. He justifies you too. He justifies the man in this pulpit because he justifies the ungodly. I don't know about you but I may just take off and run through that back wall. Seriously before I came out to preach, I thought, "God, how can I do this?" These treasures are so sacred and so holy we should feel unworthy to even speak of them. They're just too precious. Don't think that he justified the ungodly as some little thing. It took the blood of his Son to justify the ungodly. Great, great, great, great cost.

Tommy, Romans 4:5 continuing, "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited," note the word "credited," "as righteousness." His faith is credited. That's an accounting term. You can't make it not an accounting term. Here's what he means: you hadn't done a thing, you haven't done a thing except that God based on what his Son did for you got the ledger sheet, the holy ledger

sheet in heaven and he credited your account with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. There has been a credit put in your account. Not just any credit, the weightiness and the wealth of Jesus is now credited to your account. 1 Corinthians 1:30, "But by His doing," whose doing? His doing. Not your doing, that's man's righteousness, "by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."

Let's expand it a little bit more, C in our outline: righteous in Christ. Look at verse 4, he just kind of summarizes and brings to this praise the Lord crescendo at the end, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." Now, the two words here that scholars just debate all the time about and I honestly do not understand what the debate is about; two words they have a lot of questions about. Not questions that changes really the doctrine at all but just about what they mean. Maybe scholars just have to discuss stuff. But the two words are the word "end" and the word "law." Christ is the end of the law. They say, "What does that mean?" Well, first of all, "end," Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, "end" can mean "completion or conclusion." That he's just the next and final culminating step. The law was leading us along and Christ came and he finished the whole thing. Or, they say, the word "end" can mean "termination; something that is now obsolete." But my conclusion is it means both. It means both. Number 1: "end" means "completion" like Galatians 3:24 and 25 tells us, "The Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor." So the law had its role; the law served to show us we couldn't keep it in order to be right with God. So it was tutoring us to Jesus and once you get to Jesus, you no longer look to the law with the notion that somehow you can keep it to be righteous before God. In that way, it is completed. But secondly, it's also a termination. It's also a termination. Hebrews 8:13, "When He said, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first," notice this word, "obsolete." That's the old covenant of works. It is now obsolete. "But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear." So in other words, the old law as far as its capacity to save folks is useless and obsolete, that is, as far as making us righteous before God or having a right standing before God. You can't keep the law enough to do it.

The other word, not only "end" is the word "law." They say, "Well, what does the word 'law' mean?" Christ is the end of the law. Well, they'll say, "Does it mean the ceremonial law, bringing the sacrifices and bringing the offerings and doing the washings and all those ceremonies they did to be right before God? Or does it mean the moral law summed up by the Ten Commandments?" It means both. What he means now is the ceremonial law has no profit for us for everything in the ceremonial law was but types of Christ; they were to point us to Christ. And now that he has come, the types have no real purpose. They are shadows and symbols and when you get the reality, you don't need the symbol any longer. That's what the author is saying.

Hebrews 9:11-14, "But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood," the blood of goats and calves were pictures of his own blood. "He entered

the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption." Verse 13, "For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience," here's the phrase, "from dead works to serve the living God?" Here's what he's saying: all the religion, all the ritual, all the ceremonies you can amass out of the old Jewish law is now but a dead work. It's a dead work. Now, friend, that translates over to every person who takes the New Testament and devises a law out of the teachings of the New Testament. It's a dead work. When they tell you, "Well, but the New Testament says you've got to do this, this and this," they're just creating a new law out of the New Testament. It's a dead work. It can't help you at all.

Secondly, not only does it mean the ceremonial law, it means the moral law also. Jesus Christ in his life fulfilled the moral law, the Ten Commandments and all the commandments of God. And in his death, he satisfied the justice the law demands against sinners. He fulfilled it in his life; he satisfies the justice it has against sinners in his death. So therefore Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. We don't look to the law anymore to gain a right standing before God.

A couple of cross-references and I know I've got a bunch but we need a bunch. 1 Corinthians 6:12, "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything." 1 Corinthians 10:23, "All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify." Four times in those two verses "all things are lawful." In other words, you can't break the law anymore in the sense of breaking the law and going to hell for it. Are you with me? As a matter of explanation, not in reality because our hearts have been changed, but in a matter of explanation you can be saved and break every law of God every day and it's not counted against you as you are a law breaker. Now, we don't do that because our hearts are changed and we've begun to love the law of our God. We don't keep it out of cold ritual trying to work to get to heaven, we keep it because we love the God whose law it is. So we wouldn't do that. That's why he says, "There is no law breaking violation you'll be judged for by breaking the law." We know we just don't go out and break the law because that's not profitable or edifying to me or anybody else.

Can I throw a side note application here for us? Here's a side note of application on that truth. There are a number of things in social life that you're not under the law. You may have freedom to do them but now listen to me: your freedom in Christ should not be as important to you as the welfare of your brother or sister in Christ. That's what he says, "not all things are profitable." You may can do a thing or two and it's not really a violation of your conscience, it's not under law, but does that figure to hurt your witness of maybe trip up or be a stumblingblock for a brother or sister in Christ? But look: you never, never, never, never, never, never, never prize your liberty over your brother even if your brother is shallow and immature. That's A, B, C, Christianity. If you're not there, you need to keep growing.

Now, when Paul says here in verse 4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes," two more thoughts here. First of all, the text is not teaching that Christ put an end to the law as a means of salvation because the law never was a means of salvation. Are you with me? He's not saying, "Okay, I'm stopping that. You used to be saved through the law and now you're saved..." No, that's not his point at all because the law never could save anyone. Genesis 15:6, Abraham as our forefather according to the faith. Abraham believed God and it was granted to him, credited. Same accounting word. Credited to him as righteousness. Not his works, his belief, his faith.

So it doesn't mean that Christ put an end to the law as a means of salvation because the law never was a means of salvation. Secondly, it doesn't teach the law has no value at all. Of course the law has value. Romans 7:12, "So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good." The law is good. It's the very nature of God but what he means in order for us to be righteous before God, the law can't help us any at all. The law becomes helpful that got us in sanctification but only after we've become right before God by faith which is justification.

The end of the law for righteousness. From the very, very, very earliest parts of church life, there have been those, it's just so terribly natural to you and I to want to put some works in there. We want so badly. Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher, he used to tell folks when he'd get through with his sermons, "I know you want me to tell you to do something." He said, "Your flesh would love for me to tell you to do something because instead of just trusting in Christ by faith you'd do what I told you and you'd never come to Christ. You'd trust what I told you to do, not Christ." Are you with me on that? It's just in our being. If you can make up a religion with some works in it, people will flock to it. They want that. It's just in our fallen nature, "Give me something I can do." We want that so bad.

It started back in the early church, Acts 15:10, the Jewish Christians in their immaturity were beginning to put legalism and law on the Gentile believers basically saying, "You've got to become a Jew to become a Christian." So they had a council that the mother church, First Grace Life Church of Jerusalem rather, Acts 15:10 and here's what they said in the council, "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?" Why are you putting this law on these new Gentile believers that all of us Jews never could keep anyway? You know that doesn't make you righteous. It never could. All the law can do is condemn you. Don't put the yoke on these new brethren that you yourself have never been able to bear. Galatians 5:1, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm," that is in grace, "and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery." That's going back to works and the law in order to try to be righteous. That yoke and that slavery, my friend, has ended because Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. Believing is when the Spirit converts the heart under the preaching of the Gospel. At that point, we believe in God's redemptive righteousness, that is, that God has a plan through Jesus to make us righteous, giving us his very righteousness as a free gift. That's what happens when we believe.

Romans 8:1-4, "Therefore there is now no condemnation," did you hear that? "No condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." In other words, the old law that showed you you were a sinner and you deserved death, including eternal death. Verse 3, "For what the Law could not do," it can't get you saved, "what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did." God did it. How? Verse 3, "sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that," now notice this, "the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us." Did you see that? It is fulfilled even though we don't fulfill it. Jesus fulfilled it for us and it is credited to our account so the requirement of the law is now fulfilled in us, "who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit." Romans 8:5, "For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Now the things of the flesh are: give me the work; give me the ceremony; give me the ritual; give me the dos; give me the don'ts; I'm going to work and try to get there. That's the flesh. The Spirit comes in, regenerates our hearts and we say, "I reject that whole notion and that whole approach. I'm casting myself wholly on Jesus Christ in faith." That's what the Spirit does. That's the law of the Spirit.

When you walk into our buildings in the mall areas out there, you walk into the Ten Commandments and they have one of two effects on you. If you walk into our buildings trusting the power of your nature and your own human strength to make you righteous then you put on a yoke and a slavery when you walk before those commandments. If you come in the east main entrance, on your left, "Thou shalt not covet and thou shalt not bear false witness." On the right, "Thou shalt not steal." If you're functioning in the strength of yourself and you're going to be righteous enough to please God, then when you walk by those, you put on a yoke and you feel the bonds of slavery. If you come in the north entrance on the left is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery and remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." On the right, "Thou shalt not murder and thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother." If you are looking to your own nature and your own strength to somehow work your way to a right standing before God, then when you walk before those commandments, you put on a yoke and you put yourself in the bonds of slavery. If you come in the south entrance, on your left will be the commandment, "You shall have no other gods before me." If you're functioning in your strength and think you're going to work your way to heaven and obtain a righteousness, then you before that commandment, put on a yoke and put on the bonds of slavery. When you come in these center main doors, on your right, on your right, "Do not make for yourselves an idol." On your left, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." If your notion is that you in your own nature and by your strength are going to obtain a righteousness before God, then those commandments are a yoke and a slavery.

Romans 1:17 reminds us, "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." What does that mean? The righteousness of God is revealed, you could amplify that, "made real to us or is ours from faith to faith." Now listen: it's not from faith to works, it's from faith to faith. It's not from faith to ceremony, it's faith to faith. It's not faith to ritual, it's faith to faith. Here's what he means: if you become righteous, you

become righteous in faith, you live trusting by faith in Jesus Christ and you die and end by faith in Jesus Christ. Not your works, not ritual, not what you can do. It's faith to faith. Now, our Church of Christ friends would say it's faith to works. It's not, it's faith to faith. Well, I believe on Christ today and I get up tomorrow morning and I believe on him again. At lunch I believe on him again and at suppertime I believe on him again. I go exercise early and I believe on him again. It's just continually in my life. My faith keeps going to Christ because I keep being aware of how I fall short and if he's not my righteousness, I'm sunk. It's faith to faith to faith to faith to faith all the way to glory.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ and your faith is truly in him, when you come in our east doors, on your left it says, "Thou shalt not covet and do not bear false witness," and on the right, "Thou shalt not steal." But you look at these and you rejoice and say, "These are truly what Paul said. These are holy and righteous and true and they represent the very character of my God so I love them." Secondly, you say, "But I am poor in spirit and I mourn because I know if it were left to me, I'd fall terribly short." Then you rejoice again and know that Christ, not your works, not your effort, has made you righteous in God's sight.

If you come in through the north entrance you'll see on your left, "Thou shalt not commit adultery and remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy," and on your right, "Thou shalt not murder," and if you truly believe in Christ, you'll look at those and say, "Yes, those are holy and righteous and true." But then you'll mourn some. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn." And you'll be poor in spirit to a degree because Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit," because you'll say, "Boy, left up to me, I'd terribly fail and I'm judged." Then you rejoice after that and say, "But hallelujah! My faith is in Jesus to make me righteous, not keeping these laws."

If you go on down to the south entrance, on the left, "You shall have no gods before me." If you come in through the main doors back there on the left, "You shall not take the name of the Lord our God in vain," and on the right, "Do not make for yourselves an idol." If your faith is in Jesus Christ, you'll say, "I rejoice. These commandments are holy and righteous and true but I mourn in my spirit and I'm poor in spirit because I know if it were left to me, I would fail. I'm terribly deficient. But I rejoice again because Jesus Christ makes me righteous."

You see, friend, Christ did not just give you righteousness, Christ is your righteousness. You see, if the theology was just that Christ gives you righteousness, you could lose it. You'd mess it up. We all know how children are, don't we? You give a little three, four year old boy a \$20 bill and say, "Here's a \$20 bill and I want you to get something fun with it," and the next thing, mamma is gonna say, "I'm gonna keep that. I'm gonna keep that and when you find what you want, I'll give it to you and we'll buy it." Amen? That's what God does. "I'm not just going to give it to you, you'll mess it up. You'll lose it. I'm going to keep it." Jesus is your righteousness.

Your righteousness is not your works. It's not even been given to you in the fullest biblical sense to dwell in you, your righteousness is where? Look, there it is seated at the

right hand of the Majesty on high. He, welcomed in heaven, standing at the right hand of the Father, there's my righteousness. There it is and he's the same yesterday, today and forever. He cannot be moved or toppled. Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea, a great High Priest whose name is love, who ever lives and intercedes for me. That's your righteousness. It's a person, Jesus Christ. And all of God's people said, Amen.

Brother Tom, are you ready to sing?