



METRO NEW YORK WORLD MINISTRY
ADULT SABBATH SCHOOL CONTRIBUTING NOTES
For the week of December 20 – 26, 2014
Lesson #13: **The Book of James, Lesson 13**

Book of James, Lesson 13: The Everlasting Gospel

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” Romans 5:19. By the disobedience of one man, Adam, we were all born with fallen natures with the inclination to sin. Even so, by the obedience of one man, Jesus Christ, we can all have new natures and “be made righteous.”

So the question becomes, “How can the righteousness of that one man, Jesus Christ, make me righteous?” This is what the gospel is all about. How can God take a sinner and not only forgive him for his past sins, but also change his life to do that which is altogether beautiful and just?

We have all struggled with sin. As Paul describes this struggle, saying, “For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that it is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me....I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good....Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” Romans 7:15-17, 21, 24.
NASB

Who alone can save us from this terrible fallen condition? It is Jesus. As Paul wrote, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:3, 4

For centuries men have tried to keep God’s law with their fallen natures. What was the result? It was one hundred percent failure. So what did God do? He sent His own Son in the likeness of our “sinful flesh” and He condemned sin in the flesh by living a sinless life in our sinful flesh. As a result, Jesus became our perfect sacrifice for sin. Through Him we may be forgiven for all our sins because He lived a sinless life.

But the perfect life of Jesus did more than pay the penalty for our sins. It is now possible for the “righteousness of law” to “be fulfilled in us.” Imagine that! Christ came not only to forgive us of our past sins, but He also opened the way for us to do what we know we should be doing. This is the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are more than forgiven, we are changed!

The book of Romans teaches us how to be both forgiven and transformed. In doing so, Paul will help us understand the relationship between the perfect and sinless life of Jesus and God’s perfect Ten Commandments. That’s right! Paul will explain the connection between the righteousness of Christ and His righteous law.



The Righteousness of Christ in Relation to the Law

When we consider the relationship between the righteousness of Christ and His perfect law, what has happened throughout history? The Jewish nation accepted the perfect moral law but rejected the perfect and sinless Messiah, Jesus Christ. Therefore, it was impossible for them to understand the perfect relationship between the righteousness of Christ and the law.

Much of the Christian world has accepted the perfect and sinless life of Jesus but has rejected God's moral law as still binding upon the believer. Therefore, it has been impossible for many of them to understand the perfect relationship between the righteousness of Christ and His perfect law. So let us begin by defining the term "righteousness."

What is "righteousness"?

The Bible says, "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness." Psalm 119:172.

"Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law;" Isaiah 51:7.

"But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." Romans 9:31.

It is clear from these verses that the law of God is the "law of righteousness," that all of God's commandments "are righteousness," that those who know God's law "know righteousness."

The apostle Paul wrote that the law of God is "holy, and just, and good. . . . For we know that the law is spiritual." Romans 7:12, 14.

The beloved John wrote, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." 1 John 3:4.

Jesus had summarized the law by one's love for God and his fellowman. See Matthew 22:36-39.

So we can truly learn about righteousness from two sources. First, there is the altogether beautiful and perfect life of Jesus. Second, there is God's great moral standard of righteousness, His holy law.

What does God's righteous law direct us to do?

"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." Galatians 3:24.

When we look at the perfect law of righteousness it teaches us that we are sinners. As such, it points us to the need of a Savior. It points us to Jesus.

The law helps us to understand what sin truly is. The Bible says, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet. . . . For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. . . ."



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Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.” Romans 7:7, 9, 13.

The law is not against us; rather, it is for us by showing us our true condition. The law reveals sin in us. It causes us to flee to Christ for forgiveness. As Paul wrote, “Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” Romans 5:20.

The deeper I understand God’s law the more sinful my sins appear. The more my sinfulness becomes apparent, the greater grace appears. The more I realize my helplessness, the more I will depend upon Christ for mercy and strength. It is good to see my sinfulness that I might know Him who is mighty to save.

Can the law justify me? Or, can I be justified by the works of the law?

“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.” Romans 3:20.

“Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.” Galatians 2:16.

The Bible clearly teaches that we cannot erase our sinful past by keeping God’s law in the present.

Why can’t we be justified by the works of the law?

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” James 2:10.

It is not possible to be justified by a perfect law that we have already broken. Even if we could keep God’s law perfectly today and forever on our own, we would still fall short of being justified by it. Why? We have already broken God’s perfect law.

So how can I stand justified before God?

We can stand innocent before God by accepting the pardoning power of Christ’s death for our sins. The Bible says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9. When I ask God to forgive me of my sins, He keeps His promise, and He forgives me of my sins. I now stand justified in God’s sight.

Can I earn salvation by my good deeds or the works of the law?

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8.

“And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” Romans 11:6.

We are either saved by the grace of God or we earn salvation. It cannot be both. It is either a gift from God or we earn it.



So how can we be accounted righteous when the law already condemns us?

“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” 1 Corinthians 1:30.

Jesus is our righteousness, both imputed and imparted. This is why Jesus is called “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Jeremiah 23:6.

We have no righteousness of our own. The law defines what is righteous, but the law cannot give us righteousness. We receive righteousness from only one source, that is, Jesus Christ.

Jesus becomes the Son of man

To save man from his sinful condition, to rescue man from the condemnation of the law, the Father sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, into our world.

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” John 1:14.

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Romans 8:3, 4.

In the weakness of our fallen flesh, we are not able to keep God’s perfect law. Therefore, God sent His own Son in the likeness of our sinful flesh to live a perfect life according to His perfect law. He did this that we might now walk in obedience to His perfect law through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul testifies that Jesus “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Hebrews 4:15.

Through a constant surrender of His will to His Father, Christ was able to say at the end of His life, “I have kept My Father’s commandments. . . . I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do.” John 15:10; 17:4.

Jesus came in our fallen flesh to live a life for us. Day by day, choice by choice, Jesus wove in His own life a robe of righteous obedience to the Ten Commandments. Why did He do all this? He did it for us. He wanted to save us from our transgression of His perfect law. He came to pay the penalty of our sins, which is death. See Romans 6:23. He wanted us to be able to live a new life of obedience in Him, that we may enjoy eternity with the Father forever.

When I look into the perfect mirror of God’s law, it condemns me as a sinner. When Jesus looks into the perfect mirror of God’s law, it declares that He is righteous. Therefore, for me to stand innocent before God’s perfect law I must have Christ’s righteousness.

I have no righteousness of my own to meet the claims of God’s righteous law. Through Christ’s perfect sacrifice for sin I am able to be forgiven of my past sins and stand innocent before God. By allowing Jesus to live in my heart by faith I am now able to live a new life in obedience to God’s Ten Commandments.



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Therefore, the gospel is the good news of how Jesus kept God's law perfectly for us, that He might be our perfect Savior in the forgiveness of sin, and our perfect Savior in the deliverance from sin. The Bible says, "And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins." Matthew 1:21.

What is imputed righteousness?

Paul wrote, "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works." Romans 4:6. The word "imputeth" is the same as the word "credit."

God will credit the perfect, sinless, and righteous life of Jesus to your account in heaven. Did you catch that! When God forgives you of your sins, you are more than forgiven of your past. He also credits to your account the thirty-three years of Christ's sinless life.

Do we deserve to have Christ's perfect life credited to us as if we lived His life? Absolutely not! But due to God's love and grace, He not only forgives us of our sinful past, but also credits to us the life of His dear Son as if we lived that life.

Now if God is willing to credit to you the sinless life of Jesus, are you willing to serve Him with your whole heart? Do you want God to do more than credit the life of His Son to you? Do you want Him to impart that life to you?

What is the imparted righteousness of Christ?

Through the work of the Holy Spirit the perfect and sinless life of Jesus may be imparted to us. Remember, God's forgiveness is more than a judicial act which sets us free from the condemnation of the law. Jesus came to deliver us from sin. Those who are forgiven are changed. This is the good news of the gospel.

The message of righteousness by faith is a most precious message that invites the people to receive the righteousness of Christ. What is the righteousness of Christ? It is perfect obedience to all the commandments of God. As Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep the commandments." John 14:15.

So how do I know if Christ dwells in me by the power of the Holy Spirit? If the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the Ten Commandments.

In summary, Christ lived a sinless life in our fallen flesh. He lived in perfect obedience to His Father's commands. Christ died for us to pay the penalty for our sins. Christ is risen and offers us His own righteousness to replace our garments stained with sin. If we accept Him as our Savior, no matter how sinful our past, for His sake we are accounted righteous. Christ will impute or credit to our account in heaven His own righteousness.

More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in our heart by faith. If we maintain our connection with Him, He will work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure. So then we can say, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2:20.



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So what is the perfect relationship between the sinless life of Christ and His perfect and righteous law?

We can have all the righteousness that the law requires, but we cannot obtain this righteousness from the law itself. We cannot obtain it by simply trying harder. We receive righteousness from only one place. We receive it from Christ. He is the Righteous One. When we receive Him, we receive who He is. And who is Jesus? He is the perfect, sinless, and righteous Son of God. The more we have of Him the more righteousness we have received.

So what is the key to receiving righteousness? It is receiving Jesus every day as your life. As John wrote, "He that hath the Son hath life: and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 1 John 5:12. Do you want life? Do you want righteousness? Then have more of Jesus, the Righteous One.

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