

“Word on Wednesday Bible Study”

“The Righteousness of God”

Chapters 4-7

Minister Perseus Poku

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Date of Writing: Circa 57 AD

Location: Paul wrote this letter in Corinth.

Target audience: Jewish and Gentile Christians living in Rome

Theme: *The Righteousness of God*

The Greek word for righteousness in this context is dikaiosune (dik-ah-yos-soo-nay). It literally means equity of character. It is derived from the Greek word dikaios (dik-ah-yos) which is defined as equitable and it signifies one who is innocent, holy, just, or right.

Chapter 4 (vv.1-25)

The theme of righteousness is continued in chapter 4. This time Paul references the Biblical patriarch Abraham in order to buttress his point. He again cites an Old Testament passage found (Gen. 1:6). Paul argues that Abraham was not justified by his works but rather by His belief in God. Furthermore, this type of faith in God can be found in David as referenced in Psalm 32:1-2.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.”-Psalm 32:1-2

It is not human efforts through works that justifies a believer but their belief rooted in faith. Paul after making this statement then shifts his attention back to Abraham. It is clear that this passage was written to those who esteemed Abraham and David. It is very likely that this passage was composed to get the attention of the Jews in Rome. Abraham according to Paul was justified prior to physical circumcision (cf. Gen. 17:26) as noted in verses 9-12. Abraham as the progenitor of all mankind was justified prior to his physical circumcision because of his faith (cf. Gen. 17:5). Likewise, the seeds of Abraham (mankind) are justified through the circumcision of the heart.

Paul continues his argument on Abraham's faith by providing specific moments when Abraham displayed his faith. According to Paul the following acts were credited as righteousness by God.

- ✓ He believed that God would give a son through his elderly wife Sarah (vs. 17).
- ✓ He believed that God would use him to conceive a son even at a hundred years old (vv. 18-19).
- ✓ He had faith that God would fulfill His promise to him (vs. 20).

This chapter concludes with an assurance. Just like the aforementioned acts were counted towards righteousness, *anyone who believes in God through the Son can also be justified* (vv. 23-25).

Chapter 5 (vv. 1-21)

The transitional word "therefore" let us know that chapter is connected to chapter 4. After arguing his point, Paul now unpacks what he just wrote. Since he informed his readers about the criteria for justification, he shares the benefits of having faith in God (vv. 2-5).

- ✓ Justification brings peace with God.
- ✓ We all have access to God through faith.
- ✓ We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.
- ✓ We glory in tribulations. Tribulations produces perseverance, perseverance builds character, character provides hope which has been poured into us by the Holy Spirit.

Paul after uplifting the hearts of his readers transitions to the work of Christ. Paul attempts to demonstrate that our hope as believers is tied in to Christ. This connection is dependable because the atonement is God's gift to humanity (vv. 6-10).

Moreover, the atonement reconciled us back to God. The love of God persisted. His love had been extended to all of us while we were yet sinners (vs. 8). In addition, Paul makes clear the condition and historicity of mankind. In other words, Paul retraces the origin of sin. He reminds his readers that Adam ushered sin in to the world. Since we are all children of Adam we inherited the sin problem. However, the atonement gave humanity an opportunity to remedy the issue of sin.

He reminds them again that the penalty for sin was death but the free gift of God offered justification of life (vv. 12-19). Furthermore, where sin reigned and led to death, grace under God through Christ reign more through righteousness (vs. 20).

Chapter 6 (vv. 1-23)

In this sixth chapter, Paul continues his message of righteousness. He challenges the false theology that some within the church have adopted. It is wrongly deduced by some that they can premeditate sin knowing that God forgives. Paul emphatically condemns this false interpretation of the Scriptures.

He argues that if we are dead to sin then we no longer live in it. He implements this illustration of death and life to further argue his point. Due to what Christ did on the cross the stronghold of sin has been put to death. Baptism was a ceremonial example that we went down in the water as sinners but rose up in the newness of life (vv. 1-6).

Furthermore, Paul continues to use his illustrations concerning death, life, burial and resurrection. He argues the following (vv. 5-11).

- ✓ We have been united together in the likeness of His death.
- ✓ We shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.
- ✓ Our old nature has been crucified with Him. This dying of the old nature produces the following effects:
 - That we should no longer be enslaved to sin.
- ✓ Those who are dead to sin, have been freed from sin.
- ✓ If we die with Christ we shall also live with Him. According to Paul just like Jesus overcame the sin of death, believers are alive and dead to sin. In other words, the same power that rose up Jesus from the dead is the same power that can help believers subdue their sinful nature. In short, the old nature is suppressed but not eradicated.

Paul informs the church of Phillip to not let sin reign. Again, a unique play on words. Many of us use this word “reign” when referring to someone ruling a group of people (e.g. country). However in this context Paul is using the same word to apply to sin. Sin rules the lives of those who have not surrendered to Christ. His message is do not let sin reign in your body because that is inconsistent with the new nature. Paul continues his admonition by further unpacking his thesis (vs. 12):

- ✓ Do not let sin reign in your body. If not you will obey the lust of the flesh.
- ✓ Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin.
- ✓ Present yourself to God as being alive from the dead.
- ✓ Sin should not have dominion over you, you are under grace not the law.

Paul reminds the Philippian church that they are now under grace and not the law. The reality of this mercy does not give believers a license to sin. Furthermore, he calls them slaves of righteousness (vs. 18). Paul presents his letter in a way which would force his readers to think. In the same manner or zeal that they used while in sin, they should place at least the same efforts in serving God. They were once slaves of sin but are now slaves of righteousness. Following the law led to more lawlessness. Conversely, following the law of righteousness would lead to more holiness. Paul concludes this chapter with a familiar Christian verse. He alerts his readers concerning the reality of sin.

“For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.” - Romans 6:23

Chapter 7 (vv. 1-25)

In this chapter Paul elaborates on the issue of extrication from the law. In order to argue his point, he gives an example that can be understood by his readers. Paul argues that in Jewish custom (based on their interpretation of the Law) when a husband is living the wife is bound to him until he dies. In the same way, their former view of the law is dead and it is permissible for them to get married to Christ (vv. 1-7).

Paul continues to talk about how the old interpretation of the law was impotent against sin. In short, he argued that the old interpretation of the law could not deliver anyone from sin. Furthermore, he wanted his readers to get a clear understanding of having two natures. Paul informs his listeners that there is no such thing as *sinless perfection*. If sinless perfection is defined as never committing a transgression then this view is incorrect (vv. 8-12).

Paul let us know that even he struggled at times. There were times that even he struggled with making the right decision. Paul let us know that the old nature was not eradicated upon accepting Christ. It is still there. However, living in righteousness cause the old nature to become anemic (vv. 13-20).

This chapter concludes with good news. According to Paul we are able to overcome the struggle with the old nature through the power of Christ. Believers can overcome if they choose to adopt the law of God (vv. 21-25).

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