

# THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

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JEREMIAH 23:5 • TV168B

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By  
**HENRY T. MAHAN**

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## **Jeremiah 23:5**

*“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”*

I want you to turn with me in your Bible to the Old Testament, to the **Book of Jeremiah**, who was called *“the weeping prophet.”* The **23<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of Jeremiah**; I am going to read **verse 6**:

Now, Paul said one time, *“To preach the same things to you to me is not grievous (it is no great burden to bear; I am glad to do it, he said), and it is profitable for you.”*

The message which I am going to bring from this Scripture this morning will perhaps be (and I say this quite confidently, regardless whether I preach it with liberty or no liberty), but the things I am going to say are vital, essential, and most important in your life. I believe it will be the most important message you will ever hear. I hope you will listen to it.

## THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

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JEREMIAH 23:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

That is confidence isn't it? I believe that; I am speaking this morning on this subject: **"THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."** I could have no greater theme. I could not have a more vital theme: **"THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."**

Now; listen to **Jeremiah 23:6**: *"In his day Judah shall be saved."* Now, that is good news, *"Judah shall be saved:"* That's what I want, do you? *"And shall dwell safely, and shall dwell safely unto the hand of God, unto the blessings of God, and this is his name whereby he shall be called "the Lord our righteousness, the Lord our righteousness."*

This is where we must start. We have to start where sin started. If we are going to deal with sin, we have to define it. If we are going to preach about sin we are going to have to go back and define it, where it started.

When we review the fall of man, the first sin in the Garden of Eden, we discover how great was that sin and great was that fall and how infinite our loss. Man lost everything in the Garden; he lost everything.

Starting with his flesh, he became a corrupt, dying creature, as a result of that fall. He was once strong, now weak, once healthy, now sick, once always living, now always dying, pain, sorrow, sickness, old age, and death.

*"It is appointed unto men once to die."* All of this is the result of that fall. How infinite, how great was our loss.

Then, man lost happiness, that's right; he lost happiness. He became a creature of fear. He became a creature of shame. He didn't know anything about fear and shame before he fell. He didn't know anything about hate. He didn't know anything about grief.

Men can't live alone and they can't live together; did you know that? People are so corrupt; we are so corrupt that we can't live alone; we don't want to live alone, but we can't live together in peace.

Everybody is talking about peace but they are talking about it on a grand, international scale. But, we are not going to know anything about peace on a grand, international scale, until we know something about personal peace.

That is where it all starts. I hear these fellows talking about, "why can't these nations get along?" Well, the same fellows that are talking about it are not getting along in their homes, they are not getting along on their jobs, and they are not getting along in their social clubs. They can't even play a game of golf without fighting with each other.

The reason nations can't have peace is because individuals have no peace. We became unhappy creatures. We became creatures of fear, shame, hate, greed, and all of these obnoxious things as a result of that fall.

## THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

JEREMIAH 23:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

Not only that; man lost fellowship with God. He was cast out of God's presence; his sin separated him and God. That is what the Scripture says. *"Your sins have separated you and God."*

Our Lord Jesus Christ came down to this earth and they didn't know Him. *"He was in the world and the world knew him not. He came unto his own and his own received him not."*

*"He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows acquainted with grief,"* and nailed to a cross, the very one who made this earth. They didn't know Him. He said, *"You don't know me or my Father."*

Here's the whole problem: I have talked about these different problems, the corruption of the flesh, the death of the flesh, unhappiness, lack of peace, and the loss of fellowship with God. Underlying the whole thing; here is the underlying problem of the whole matter and the sobering truth is this:

In man's fall he lost his righteous nature; that is what he lost; he lost his holy, righteous, nature. The Bible says that when God created Adam *"he created Adam righteous;"* that means without sin; that means without flaw; that means without fault; that means without death. That means without one taint of sin; he made man perfect.

As a result of that fall man lost that holiness. He lost that nature of righteousness. He became a sinner. He became a transgressor. He became ungodly. He became a rebel against God. That is what happened in the Garden, man lost his holy nature.

Now, I know that we like to talk about the goodness of the creature. Preachers like to talk about man's dignity and man's goodness, all of us do. We like to extol our virtues. We do not want to admit the truth of depravity; very few people will admit the truth of depravity.

Let me tell you this: In the sight of God, the Scripture says; *"we all fade as the leaf."* In the sight of God the Scripture says, *"We are all as an unclean thing."* In the sight of God the Scripture says, *"There is none good, no not one."* That's what God's Word says.

The Scriptures declare that *"from the sole of our feet to the top of our heads there is no soundness;"* we are corrupt and that we lost our righteousness; we lost our holiness.

Now, Adam had it; Adam had a perfect holiness and consequently, he had access to God. God spoke with him, God walked with him, God talked with him, and God fellowshiped with him.

But, when Adam became a sinner, he was filled with this nature of evil (to whatever degree). But, when he had sin, God could no longer fellowship with him. His sins separated him from God.

## THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

JEREMIAH 23:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

You see, when our Lord died on the cross and bore our sins in His body on the tree, the Father turned His back away from His Son because His Son was made sin. Now, that is what happened in the fall.

You can take all of these other things and sum them up and all the underlying root of the whole thing is that man lost his holy nature, man lost his righteous nature; he became a sinner. Listen to what the Bible says in **Genesis 6:5**: “*And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was evil continually.*”

We are not comparing man with man; when we do that we miss the whole picture; we are comparing man with God. You see; when God made man He made him in His image, not the image of another creature, not an image of an angel; He made him in His image.

He made him holy and upright in His image, in His sight. When man fell he lost God’s image; he lost God’s fellowship. He became a sinner in God’s sight. That’s the only comparison you can use. He could fellowship with each other if he could stop fighting long enough.

He could fellowship with the animals if he could keep them from eating him, but he can’t fellowship with God because he has lost his holy nature. God is holy; God is holy; God is holy.

Listen to the Scriptures: In **Romans 3:9**, Paul said; “*We have before proved that both Jews and Gentiles, they are all under sin. There’s none righteous, no not one. There’s none that understandeth, no not one. There’s none good, no not one. There’s none that seeketh after God.*”

Listen to **Isaiah 1**: “*The whole head is sick; the whole heart is faint.*” Listen to **Ecclesiastes 7:29**: The wise man Solomon said; “*Lo, this have I found.*” You and I better find it out too so that we can have something done about it.

“*This have I found that God made man upright (righteous).*” That’s what “*upright*” means, righteous. “*But, men sought out many inventions.*”

So, here is my summary: We have no righteousness, no holiness, no beauty, in God’s sight.

Our Lord said, “*You are they which justify yourselves in the sight of men.*” We are busy doing that; we want to build up our reputation, build up our character, and build up the opinion of men (human opinion).

In God’s sight “*we justify ourselves among men but God looks on your heart.*” That’s what He said, “*and that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God.*” We have no righteousness, no righteousness.

Secondly: “*To offend in one point of the law is to be guilty of the whole law.*”

## THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

JEREMIAH 23:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

We may stand in defense of ourselves and say, "I've never done this and never done that and never done something else." But, wait a minute! Have you done this? "Well, yes, to a degree." To offend in one point of the law, is to be guilty of the whole law.

How many crimes does a man have to commit to be a criminal, just one? How many sins does a man have to commit to be a sinner, just one? You see; "*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*"

Thirdly: What we call righteousness, here's something; now hold onto your chair for a minute! What we call righteousness, what your preacher calls righteousness, what your church calls righteousness, and what do they call righteousness?

They call it giving, witnessing, singing, singing in the choir, teaching Sunday school, visiting, soul-winning, this is all their righteousness. God said; "*Our righteousnesses are filthy rags in God's sight.*" I'm talking about in God's sight, "*filthy rags.*"

You can take all of my good works and your works combined and in the sight of God they are filthy cloths, dirty rags. That's right; before the law, before God's holy law we stand, my friends, condemned.

"*What the law saith it saith to everyone under the law that every mouth may be stopped and all (do you see these terms) the world become guilty.*" There is no other plea, guilty!

It rises from every nation, guilty. It rises from every tribe, guilty. It rises from every home, guilty. It rises from every individual, guilty, guilty, in God's sight.

Now, men change; we have changed; we were created righteous but we have changed; we are unrighteous now, unrighteous before God.

We are guilty before God but God hasn't changed. Now, here is our problem! Do you see where I am going? God hasn't changed. What God has required God still requires; what God demands God still demands. What God Almighty commands He still commands; He hasn't changed.

Now, there was a time when we walked with Him but no more. There was a time when we fellowshiped with Him but no more. There was a time when we had accord with Him but no more. There was a time when we were accepted, but no more. He hasn't changed; He is still the same. We change.

"*What doth the Lord our God require of thee?*" That ought to be interesting; what He requires is the same thing that He has always required and it is in **Deuteronomy 10:12**: "*He requires of thee to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways and to love him.*"

"*All his ways,*" not those that please you or the best you can, "*all his ways,*" to love the Lord thy God! Christ said, "*with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.*"

## THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

JEREMIAH 23:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

Fourthly: *“To serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul.”*

This hasn't changed; this hasn't changed. God requires perfection; He always has, He does now, and He always will.

Perfection of heart, perfection of mind, perfection of word, and perfection of deed; what God required of Adam and what He got out of Adam before the fall, perfection is what He requires of you.

That's just so; there is no argument connected with it because God hasn't changed, He can't change. *“He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”* He said, *“I am God; I change not.”*

So, the Scripture says this; *“Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things written in the law to do them.”* It's actually required of you and me that we walk before God. From the day that we breathe our first breath to the day we close our eyes in death, it is required that we walk before God in word, thought and deed, in absolute, unchangeable, infinite, perfection.

God cannot require anything else and He cannot be satisfied with anything else. A man must have a perfect righteousness or God can't receive him, God can't have fellowship with him, God cannot even hear him when he prays.

God cannot look upon him. God is holy! **Psalm 24** says this; (now listen to it) I am being truly honest with you; *“who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?”* That is our ambition isn't it? All right; *“who shall stand in his holy place?”*

That is our desire. The answer comes ringing loud and clear, *“he that hath clean hands and a pure heart.”* That is what it says, *“Who hath never lifted up his soul to vanity nor sworn deceitfully. That man shall receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”*

My friends; like the lawyer of old said; “My case is clear.” I have presented it, I think, clearly from the Scripture; *“God is holy.”* Do you have any doubt about it? Read **Isaiah Chapter 6:** *“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts.”* God is holy!

He has not changed; He will not change, and He cannot change. Man has changed. Man is unholy. He is unholy from the sole of his feet to the top of his head. *“Man at his best state is altogether vanity.”*

There is no good thing dwelling in my flesh. *“In my flesh I cannot please God.”* I am unholy to the core, from inside out and from outside in, from top to bottom, *“my whole head is sick, my whole heart is faint,”* in God's sight.

I may be just as moral as you but I am not as moral as God. I may be just as righteous as you but I am not as righteous as God. I have sinned and come short of the righteousness of God and I cannot change. It is beyond my power to change.

## THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

JEREMIAH 23:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

*“Can the Ethiopian change his skin,”* the prophet asked? *“Can the leopard change his spots? Neither can you do good that are born to do evil.”* That is so!

God requires holiness equal to His. You can't question that; He has to remain and to be God. He cannot lessen His requirements; He cannot lessen His demands and be just and holy; He can't do it.

He requires righteousness without a flaw; Christ said that. He looked at his disciples one day and he said this to them; *“You see those religious Pharisees, the best men of your day, outwardly speaking, if your righteousness does not exceed theirs.”*

Those men who fast twice a week, give alms and tithes of all they possess, who before the law, the written law, are blameless, who serve about the temple, who have given their lives to the service of the temple and to the service of God; *“if your righteousness, (if your holiness) does not exceed theirs, you won't even enter the kingdom of God.”*

It has to exceed theirs infinitely because it has to be equal with God's. What I am saying is before we can approach God, before we can be received of God, before we can have fellowship with God or be sons of God or walk with God, we have to have what we don't have; we have to have what we can't produce.

What we have to have no man can give us, no church can confer upon you, and no water can put upon you; no deeds can do it.

Where is this righteousness found, this holiness, *“without which no man will see the Lord,”* this righteousness that God Almighty must have? Let me point out first of all where it is not found!

It's clear that it is not found in us, surely, surely; there is no one out there listening to me that is so deceived as to think that you are without sin; there is nobody out there. Is there someone out there that believes you are without sin?

Listen to **1 John 1:8**: *“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.”* Now; you wouldn't fly in the face of that Scripture would you?

What about the **10<sup>th</sup> verse**? *“If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar.”* Now; you wouldn't handle that would you? We are sinners; *“in my flesh dwelleth no good thing,”* Paul said.

The thought of foolishness is sin. Anything short of a perfect righteousness, even in thought, is sin. So, it is not found in us.

This righteousness; I have to have it; I want it; I must have it if I approach God; it is not found in me. It is not found in the law. I will just give you one verse to convince you that this righteousness cannot be found in the law; it says:

## THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

JEREMIAH 23:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

*“If righteousness comes by the law, Christ died in vain, Christ died in vain.”* You wouldn’t look for it there would you? You wouldn’t make the death of Christ of no effect would you? You wouldn’t say He wasted His time when He came down here and died on that cross would you?

You wouldn’t say that that was a foolish enterprise would you? Well, you are doing that when you try to find righteousness in the law.

You won’t find it in your works. Listen to the Bible: *“No man is justified before God, in the sight of God, by the deeds of the law,”* no man. *“It’s not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy.”*

When we have done all that we can do or even are commanded to do which we are still unprofitable servants, Augustus Toplady wrote:

**“In my hands no price I bring  
Simply to the cross of Christ I cling.**

**Could my tears forever flow?  
Could my zeal no languor know?**

**These for sin could never atone  
Christ must save and Christ alone.”**

You, who would live under the law, you who would seek righteousness in the law, you who would seek holiness by the law, Paul said; *“do you know what the law says?”* Do you have the faintest notion of what this law requires?

Just read part of it sometime. If the Holy Spirit gives you any insight, whatsoever, into the holy law of God, you will throw up your hands weeping before God and you will cry for deliverance from that bondage.

Now, listen to me; God requires what He must require, holiness. God requires what He must require, righteousness. God requires what I do not have, holiness. God requires what I cannot produce, perfection.

God requires what I cannot find, either in religion, the law, works, ceremony, rituals, circumcision, baptism, sacraments, or in the sprinkling of water from a man’s hands; it requires what He must require, perfect holiness, perfect righteousness, *“without which no man will see the Lord.”*

Now, I am not talking about you giving up a few sins and holding on to some more. I’m not talking about you quitting a few bad habits and joining the church. I am talking about a perfect holiness.



## THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

JEREMIAH 23:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

Your heart must be as snow white in God's sight, your hands pure and clean as the hands of the Son of God, your mind and your soul without one stain of sin. If you are going to stand before God it has to be, it has to be.

Where is it found? All right; it is found only in one place; it is found in God's own Son, Jesus Christ the Lord. That is where it is found. That is plain and simple; that is where it is found. Christ is our righteousness! That is what my text says; *"The Lord is our righteousness."*

The Lord is my holiness. The Lord is my perfection. That is what I am talking about; that is where it is found, that is where it is found.

Turn to **Romans 3**; I am going to show you the Gospel today, the Gospel of God's righteousness and holiness as clear as I can show it to you. If you can't see it here, at least with the mind, then you can't see.

These words are clear and plain in **Romans 3:19**; it says this: *"What the law saith it says to everybody under the law that every mouth may be stopped."* Let's put our hand over our mouths and not say anything; no more alibies, excuses, or self-justification.

Just let these things go that *"every mouth be stopped and all the world become guilty and condemned before God."* That's where we are; we are whether we admit it or not, condemned and guilty.

The next verse says: *"Therefore, (because that's true, because our mouths are shut and we are guilty before God), by the deeds of the law, (by your own works and efforts) no flesh shall be justified (or righteous) before God."* That's where we have to do business, before God.

Now, you can go down in front of the church and deceive everybody in the whole crowd and make them think how holy you are but before God is what we are talking about now. **Verse 21** says: *"But now, (right now, there is a righteousness provided); there is a righteousness of God."*

There is holiness; it's available without the law. What does that mean? That means without your obedience and my obedience because I have already shown you from the Scripture that we can't in the flesh, perfectly keep God's law.

There's righteousness without the law available and it's manifested in the Scriptures. It is revealed in the Scriptures; it's taught in the Scriptures; and it's preached in the Scriptures. Where is it? It is in **verse 22**: *"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe."* It's the righteousness of God which is accomplished by Jesus Christ in His obedient life and death and it is ours by faith in Him." That's where it is, in Jesus Christ; that's where it is.

God's Son, God's perfect, immaculate, infinite Son, came into this world, born of a woman, made of a woman. He who made woman was made of woman. *"He became flesh, made under the law, (subject to His own law) that he might redeem us who were born under the law."*

## THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

JEREMIAH 23:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

---

You see; by the disobedience of Adam we were made sinners. By the obedience of Christ we were made again, righteous. *“This is a faithful saying; Christ Jesus came into the world (for the sole purpose) to save sinners of whom I am chief.”*

As a human being, as a man born of a woman with flesh and blood, *“tempted in all points as I am, yet without sin;”* Jesus Christ knew no sin, He had no sin; He was holy; He was perfectly holy in God’s sight.

Men hated Him but God loved Him. Men despised Him but God received him. Men rejected Him but God Almighty honored Him. He exalted Him and *“gave him a name above every name.”* Jesus Christ loved God with all His heart.

He loved God; He loved his neighbor as himself. He knew no sin. He obeyed every jot and tittle of every law perfectly without sin; that’s right; He did as a man in the flesh.

My friends; the life of Christ constitutes that righteousness which His people need, which God the Father requires and wherein we stand. We are clothed in His righteousness. We are received in His righteousness. We are accepted in His righteousness.

I know that some people are pretty clear on the death of Christ. They talk about the death of Christ, the blood of Christ, and the merits of His death but they do not understand the merits of His life. They do not understand the merits of His human life, the human life of Christ.

He said when He went beneath the baptismal waters; *“I do it to fulfill all righteousness.”* He said, *“I didn’t come to destroy the law; I came to fulfill the law.”* He lived on this earth 33 ½ years subject to His parents, subject to the law of the land, subject to the ceremonial law, and subject to the moral law of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ from the moment He came into this world and breathed the first breath in the flesh; He was going about the work of redemption, establishing for us a righteousness, a holiness, until the day He ascended to the Father, for He cried; *“I have finished the work you gave me to do.”*

That’s what we are talking about in **Jeremiah 23:6**: *“The Lord our righteousness.”* Now, our Lord can look upon me once again because I am righteous, not in myself but in Christ. I say with Paul; *“I am less than the least of all the saints; I am the chief of sinners.”*

But, in Christ I am holy. *“With his spotless garments on I am as holy as God’s Son.”* When He walked on this earth and met God’s law and fulfilled it, He was my representative; I did it in Him.

When He went to the cross and died under the justice of God and under the judgment of sin, under the wrath of God, I died in Him.

## THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

---

JEREMIAH 23:5 • HENRY T. MAHAN

When He was buried and rose again, in Him I arose. When He ascended I ascended with Him and I am seated with Him right now on the right hand of God.

*“God has set forth his Son to be a propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness that he might be just and justifier of all that believe in Jesus.”*

*“Abraham believed God and it was imputed to him, (reckoned to him, counted to him), for righteousness. It wasn't written for his sake alone but for us also to whom it shall be reckoned if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

That is where it is; God requires it and you don't have it. Christ produced it and purchased it. You must turn to Him or forever be turned away from God!