

# JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU – THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jeremiah 23:6

## INTRODUCTION

- Sodomite singer and songwriter, Peter Allen, wrote a song about his grandfather, the Tenterfield saddler, which contains the line, “He lived without sin”
- The people of this world have a thoroughly corrupted sense of morality
  - ✓ There are some who claim that there is no such thing as good or evil
  - ✓ There are some who have an inverted morality where they call evil good and good evil
  - ✓ There are some who know what is good and evil, but choose to give themselves over to evil
- The words “righteous” and “righteousness” are seldom used in the world today, and few people would even know what they mean
- Yet these words are two of the most important and significant words of our entire language, and a failure to understand them will result in eternal damnation
- If a person knows what righteousness is and knows how to obtain it, he has the key to eternal life
- This name of the Lord we are studying today is found in two places – Jeremiah 23:6 and 33:16
- The context and theme of Jeremiah’s ministry concerned the sin of the kingdom of Judah and God’s judgment of them through Babylon
- By the 23<sup>rd</sup> chapter, King Nebuchadnezzar had already overcome Judah, carrying king Jehoiachin to Babylon and placing his uncle, Zedekiah on the throne

- Jeremiah's message to the king was to submit to Babylon's rule as being God's chastening upon Judah, but Zedekiah was a weak ruler and rejected Jeremiah's counsel for the evil counsel of his advisers, choosing rather to fight against Babylon, which eventually led to the whole kingdom falling and the nation being carried away into captivity
- Zedekiah's original name was Mattaniah (gift of the Lord), and was changed to Zedekiah (righteousness of Jehovah) by Nebuchadnezzar, perhaps in mockery of the Jews
- Zedekiah didn't live up to his name – "he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD" (2 Kings 24:19)
- The leaders of Judah are described as wicked pastors in Jeremiah 23:1-2 who scatter Jehovah's flock by their unjust rule
- But in contrast to this, God gives a promise in vv.3-8 of a future time of blessing when he would regather them into the land and give them faithful shepherds who would feed them
- And in vv.5-6 God promises to raise up a King, a descendant of David, who "shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth", and "in his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely"
- The name of this King is "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"
- There something of a play of words here with Zedekiah's name (Tsidkiyah) – "the righteousness of Jehovah" and the coming King's name (Jehovah Tsidkenu) – "the LORD our righteousness"
- God established Israel to be a righteous nation, to obey his laws in righteousness, and they had failed dismally
- But God promised that he would take away their unrighteousness and give them a righteousness – his own righteousness, so they would look to him and call him, "The Lord Our Righteousness"

## **I. JEHOVAH TSIDKENU REVEALS HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE COMMANDMENTS**

- A. God has set his law in the heart of every person

1. The conscience is “the law written in their hearts”, giving us an inherent sense of right and wrong (Romans 2:14-15)
2. People in parts of the world who have never heard the Ten Commandments, still have a voice within them testifying that their lying, stealing or killing is wrong
3. But the conscience becomes perverted by sin, and is “defiled” (Titus 1:15), and “seared” (1 Timothy 4:2), rendering it largely useless as a legal guide for many people

B. God gave his law to man

1. The law we are concerned with is the “moral law”, summarised in the Ten Commandments
2. The moral law did not begin at Mt Sinai – it already existed and was binding upon man
3. The law is a reflection of God’s righteous character
4. It is “holy, and just, and good” (Romans 7:12)
5. God gave his law for the benefit of humanity – if the world lived by his laws, it would be like heaven on earth
6. Our appropriate response to God’s law should be to love it, obey it and worship God for it (Psalm 19:7-11)

## **II. JEHOVAH TSIDKENU REQUIRES RIGHTEOUSNESS IN HIS CREATURES**

A. Those who keep God’s law perfectly will live eternally

1. “Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 18:5; cf. Ezekiel 20:11; Luke 10:28; Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12)
2. The standard of adherence to God’s law is perfection, without once violating it (Matthew 5:48)

3. “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:10)
4. God requires man to “do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God” (Micah 6:8) – to do justly is to be perfectly righteous

B. No one has kept God’s law, we are all sinners

1. The Scriptures plainly declare what we know is true of ourselves – that we are guilty sinners before God (Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:10; 3:23; Galatians 3:22)
2. We are sinners in three ways
  - a. We are sinners by *imputation* – when Adam sinned, we *sinned in him* (Romans 5:12,19)
  - b. We are sinners by *generation* – as descendants of Adam, we inherit from him a fallen, corrupt, sinful nature, even from conception (Psalm 51:5)
  - c. We are sinners by *practice* – every day, of our own free will, we sin in thought, word and deed

C. Sin is not some minor blemish in us – it has corrupted our entire nature, separating us from God and bringing us under his condemnation

1. “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” (Genesis 6:5)
2. “How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?” (Job 15:16)
3. “They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.” (Psalm 14:3)
3. “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying

- sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” (Isaiah 1:6)
4. “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Isaiah 64:6)
- D. The just punishment for our sin is the eternal torment of the fires of hell (Romans 3:23; Revelation 21:8)

### **III. JEHOVAH TSIDKENU RENDERS HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH CHRIST**

- A. The righteousness of God revealed in the gospel
1. Our righteousness is insufficient – we need a righteousness from outside of ourselves
  2. According to Romans 1:16-17, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation, and it is the revelation of God’s righteousness by faith
  3. The righteousness of God revealed in the law *condemns* us, but the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel *saves* us
  4. The gospel reveals “the righteousness of God without the law” (Romans 3:21)
  5. It is a righteousness not earned by the works of men but given by the faith of Jesus Christ (Romans 3:21-22)
  6. God who is righteous, has declared his righteousness in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:25-26)
- B. Jesus Christ is “The Lord Our Righteousness”
1. He is our redemption (Romans 3:24)
    - a. To redeem is to purchase at a price
    - b. The law required a payment for sin in the blood of an innocent

2. He is our propitiation (Romans 3:25)
  - a. Propitiation is the payment to satisfy God's righteous anger against sin
  - b. The same Greek word (*hilasterion*) that is used for the "mercy seat" (Hebrews 9:5) is also translated as "propitiation"
  - c. As the mercy seat in the tabernacle was the place where the blood of atonement was sprinkled to atone for the sins of the people, so Jesus Christ has become our atonement, "the atonement" (Romans 5:11), once offered for our sins (1 John 2:1-2)
3. He is our justification (Romans 3:26)
  - a. To justify is to declare as righteous
  - b. Justification is a judicial act of God whereby the believing sinner is forgiven, pardoned and accepted as righteous for the sake of Jesus Christ
  - c. Through justification, "the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us", as if we ourselves had kept and fulfilled all the law (Romans 8:3-4)

C. Christ's righteousness becomes ours by *imputation*

1. Imputation means "to put on someone's account; to reckon; to lay to one's charge"
  - a. Imputation is God's act of reckoning righteousness or guilt to a person's credit or debit; it is as if we had obeyed the law and had satisfied justice
2. Justification involves "double imputation" (2 Corinthians 5:21)
  - a. Our sin is imputed to Christ
  - b. Christ's righteousness is imputed to us

- i. This includes His “passive obedience” (in paying the penalty for sin by his death)
      - ii. And His “active obedience” (in fulfilling all the precepts of the law perfectly)
  3. It is possible for God to accept us as righteous because Christ’s righteousness is made ours by imputation (Romans 4:1-8)
    - a. Christ shall “justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11)
    - b. Christ is “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30)
- D. The Lord is to be our righteousness not only in justification but also in sanctification
  1. God’s design for his people is that they are both *declared* righteous, as well as *made* righteous
  2. The moment we are saved by grace through faith, the progressive work of sanctification begins in our lives, setting us apart from sin, unto God
  3. “Who gave himself for us, that he might *redeem* us from all iniquity, and *purify* unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus 2:14)
  4. “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)

## CONCLUSION

1. Eliphaz asked the question, “What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?” (Job 15:14)
2. Sadly, many have answered that question by attempted to establish their own righteousness by their own good works (Romans 10:3-4)

3. Such people are like the self-righteous Pharisee praying in the temple – “certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous” (Luke 18:9-14)
4. The only way such people can be saved is if they come to the place where they confess with Paul, “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9)
5. There are many people who have a form of godliness – they profess to be Christians, and lead relatively moral lives – but this outward righteousness goes against their depraved, unregenerate heart which is lusts only for sin
6. But the true believer has been given a new heart – “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24)
7. The believer lives righteously not merely because of external pressures on him obliging him to do so; but he rather lives righteously because in his heart he *desires* to be righteous
8. When Christ comes to reign, the same title he bears, “The Lord Our Righteousness”, will be bestowed upon Jerusalem, the city of God (Jeremiah 33:15-16)
9. Only those who have the Lord as their righteousness will gain an entry into his holy city
10. Can you say “The Lord Is My Righteousness”?
11. If he is your righteousness you will love righteousness as he loves it (Hebrews 1:9) and you will hunger and thirst after it (Matthew 5:6)