

NO ONE IS RIGHTEOUS

Romans 2:17-3:20

Key Verse 3:10

As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one.'

Do you think there are any good people in the world? Definitely, right? There are many good people all around us. I am sure all of you present here today, are good people. But being **GOOD** is not what we want to consider this morning. Instead, we want to know if there are any **RIGHTEOUS** people in the world. There is a difference between being a **GOOD** person and a **RIGHTEOUS** person. A good person is someone approved by people. But a righteous person is someone who is approved by God.

How many righteous people do you think are there in the world? *As it is written, 'There is no one righteous, not even one.'* Yes, there are many good people among us. People who study hard, who don't get drunk or sleep around cause any trouble. Some like us even go to church on Sundays, study the bible, pray and try to serve God. But does that mean that you are righteous? That you are right with God and he accepts you? The answer is: NO!

Does that surprise you? Even offend you? It might. For I am sure you know exactly what to do and how to behave to be regarded as good by your parents, your lecturers, and your friends. It is not that difficult if you really try, right? However, the same is not true with God. Although we do many good things, when God looks down from heaven on all mankind, He sees no one who does good, not even one. (Psalms 14:1-3; Rom 3:11-12) This is quite a bombshell revelation - isn't it?!!! For it means that what is good in the eyes of people are not good in the eyes of God. The truth is.....God sees things differently. For He operates on a whole different level of what good is.....because He accepts nothing but perfection! And not human perfection.....but divine perfection..... the kind of perfection we saw in Jesus when He was on earth.

But still, why is this a big deal? It is a big deal because contrary to what many believe - no one can ever be accepted by God based on works. For unlike Jesus, we are all under sin. (3:9) To live under sin is to live in depravity. It is to be constantly kept down in imperfection and absolute failure. So even if we want to be perfect, it is simply impossible. Because under sin we cannot but always miss the target. For that is what sin means: to miss the target. So although God is a God of love and compassion, He is also a God of justice. He cannot overlook our sins. He cannot accept us with all our sins and imperfections. Instead, with justice, He must reject us. More than that....He must judge and condemns us. There are no exceptions!! For God does not show favoritism. (2:11) This is the bad news.

Then what is the good news? The good news is that God has made a way for people under sin, to once again be right with Him. Jesus is the way! Through Jesus God has made a righteousness available for the whole world. A righteousness by which God can forgive our sins and accept us as pure and perfect children. This righteousness from God is revealed in the gospel! (1:16-17)

Many of us have already received this righteousness from God, through faith in Jesus. Yet there are also some of us who are still not right with God. There can be many reasons for this. But in today's passage, we will learn that **self-righteousness is one of the biggest obstacles for people to receive a righteousness from God**. I sincerely pray that through today's passage, God may help us to accept His word no one is righteous, not even one. May God use this word to strip us from our self-righteousness..... to instead be clothed with the righteousness from God that He gives to us through faith in Jesus. Amen.

Now, the Jews are regarded by many as some of the most self-righteous people in the world. To be self-righteous means to rely on..... **something other..... than Jesus.....** to be right with God. When we carefully observe 2:17-29 we see that is exactly what the Jews did. They relied (firstly) on the law (17) and (secondly) on circumcision (25) to be right with God. Now when I say that a Jew relied on the law, it does not mean that he relied on works, though that was also what some did. No. It means that he relied on the fact **that he HAD THE LAW..... that God seemingly gave only to the Jewish nation!** Because of this privileg..... the Jews believed that they were special..... that they were distinguished above all other nations.....in that everyone was

destined for God's judgment except them. Not because they had received a righteousness from God through faith. But purely because God gave them His Laws. Can you see what self-righteousness looks like?

Self-righteousness is a terrible sin that affects us horribly! Look again at verse 17. When a Jew was self-righteous he began to boast in God. The NIV 84 translation reads - that he bragged about his good relationship with God. Do you think it is possible for anyone to have a good relationship with God purely because God gave him His laws? Of course not! For having the law of God can never break us free from the power of sin. Yet, in his self-righteousness the Jew did not think this way. Instead, he relied on the law and then boasted about how God favours him.That is not the only thing he boasted about! Look at verse 18. Because he was instructed by the law, the Jew also boasted about how well he knew the Scriptures and therefore could superiorly distinguish between right and wrong. (18) **Here we can see that the sin of self-righteousness instills a false sense of confidence in being right with God. A confidence so strong that it leads to boasting about having a righteousness.....that in truth.....is nothing but a lump of failures.....imperfections.....and an offence to God! God can and will never accept a self-righteous person's righteousness. But cast it out of His presence in the fiery lakes in hell.**

There is another horrible way self-righteousness affects us. Look at verses 19-23. (Read) Here we can see that self-righteousness also leads to hypocrisy. Because of his false sense of confidence in being right with God, a Jew were convinced that he had to teach others what to do. Yet, he failed to teach himself and did the very things they taught others not to do. **In this way, self-righteous people (look at verses 23-24) dishonours God and cause His name to be blasphemed among unbelievers.**

Now, as I mentioned earlier, there were two things a Jew relied on to be right with God. Firstly, he relied on the law. Then what was the second? Look at verse 25. Yes, a Jew also relied on circumcision to be accepted by God. Circumcision for the Jews began with Abraham, right? After Abraham was justified by faith (Gen 15:6), God established a covenant with him.....to be his God and the God of his descendants after him. (Gen 17:7) Then what did God give Abraham and his descendants as an external **SIGN** of this covenant He established with them in their hearts? Yes, circumcision.

Was Abraham justified by God before or after circumcision? Yes, before. So we can understand that Abraham's faith.....and NOT circumcision..... was the means by which he received a righteousness from God. The Jews, however, turned things around to suit them. They ignored faith and regarded physical circumcision as a guarantee of being righteous before God. But this was completely wrong! Look at verses 28-29. A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Here we can learn that to be self-righteous is to put confidence in what is outward, visible and material. Yet, what matters to God is a deep, inward, and secret work of the Holy Spirit..... in our hearts. This work comes only through faith in Christ Jesus..... The truth is, whether a believer or an unbeliever.....we are all self-righteous in one way or another. To be righteous before God we rely on things like our knowledge of the bible..... a good Christian background baptismgood behaviour.....even living a religious life like coming to church on Sundays. But we must know that none of these external things can ever make us right with God.....nor do they make us more acceptable to him. Do you know why? Because they cannot break us from the power of sin. Only the blood of Jesus can!! That is why.....apart from faith in Jesus.....no one..... can or will ever..... be righteous in the eyes of God.

But does this mean there is no advantage in doing things like going to church, reading the word of God and trying to obey Him? Look at 3:1. What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? We could paraphrase this question as follows: If a Jew is not righteous by virtue of the Law or circumcision, then what advantage is there in being a Jew? It counts for nothing! But this was not true. The Jews enjoyed many advantages. The biggest advantage was being entrusted with the very words of God..... through which they could know God and find His way of being right with Him. The same is true for you and me. The advantage of reading the bible.....coming to church on Sundays and trying to obey Him.....lies not in obtaining a righteousness before God. But instead, through these things, we can grow closer to God as we learn how to live by faith in Christ Jesus alone.

Sadly, however, not all self-righteous people want to live by faith in Christ Jesus. They much rather remain in sin. So they come up with many counterarguments of why God should not judge them. Look at verse 3. (Read) In this way, a self-righteous person can argue that since God promised to bless the Jewish nation, He would not judge any Jew because God is faithful. Judging a Jew would mean that God broke His promise to bless them. It is a clever argument, right? However, what self-righteous people who think like this don't realise is that though God is faithful.....He is also just. He will not only keep His promises but will most definitely judge each and every act of sin ever committed.

Another argument a self-righteous person may present for God not to judge them is that if their unrighteousness (their sins) brings out God's righteousness more clearly....then it will be unjust for God to bring His wrath on them. (5) For actually they are glorifying God through their unrighteousness. Or they may say: "If their falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases His glory, why will God condemn them as sinners?" (8) It's absolute madness to think this way! As Paul correctly responded: These self-righteous people's condemnation is just!

By this stage of the message, we should have realised that self-righteousness is one of the biggest obstacles to receiving a righteousness from God. Then how can you and I get rid of our self-righteousness? We must accept today's key verse deeply into our hearts. Let's read verse 10 together. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one. No matter what someone says.....no matter what he does.....even if he should memorise the whole bible.....offer millions of rands to the homeless and save thousands of people from drowning in the ocean.....he or she is not righteous. **No one is righteous!!!** I am not righteous and neither are you righteous.

Then what are we? We are all corrupted beings under the power of sin. Sadly, sin in us had replaced the righteousness of God that lived in us before the fall of man. Now when God looks at us, instead of seeing righteousness, He sees sin. Do you believe me? Then look at verses 11-18 to see what you and I have become under sin. (Read) In our sin you and I do not understand God.....neither do we seek Him without His intervention. We have all turned away from Him and have together become worthless to God.....for not one of us can do what is good in God's eyes....not even one." Sin has caused our throats to become open graves with so many horrible things streaming from our hearts through our mouths. With our tongues, we practice deceit (in other words.....we lie and deceive others.) Like the poison of vipers kills prey.....so we destroy other people with the words coming from our lips. Then, to top it off, our mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.

If you are still not convinced by your speech that you are not righteous, then consider your actions. In the same way, a murderer's feet are swift to shed innocent blood so you and I are swift to harm anyone to get what we want. That is why ruin and misery mark our ways and the way of peace we do not know." If that is not bad enough, sin has corrupted us to such an extent that in our natural state.....there is no fear of God before our eyes as we brazenly commit shameful sins in the sight of God

In conclusion. Can you understand why the bible says, "There is no one righteous, not even one?" For none is righteous. We are all guilty of the horrible things mentioned above. It is these sins God sees when He looks down from heaven on us. So when it comes to our righteousness it really does not matter how hard you have tried not to sin.....for in the end, you have sinned. It also does not matter how well you know the bible or how many times you pray a day.....for ultimately you have sinned in one way or another. Yes, in our corrupt nature, we would like to believe that all the good things we do should somehow convince God to treat us kindly. Yet the reality is, it makes absolutely no difference! Sin is sin and God must punish it.

Then what does make a difference to how God views us? Only the righteous and pure blood of Jesus. For it is by the blood of Jesus that God makes atonement for our sins.....and so no longer hold our sins against us. Then God looks at you and me through Jesus' blood as a filter. Do you know what He then sees? He sees perfection.....purity.....He sees righteousness. For the blood of Jesus not only breaks us free from sin.....but it washes away all our dirty sins for us to become white as snow.

This is the righteousness God wants to give you and me! For it is in this righteousness that God wants to bless us....use us.....and prepare us to be with Him forever. This morning, let us accept God's word that there is no

one righteous, not even one. So we can stop being self-righteous and instead turn to Jesus by faith to receive a righteousness from God. Amen.