***Attaining Righteousness***

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Traditional Christian terms and names are intentionally used throughout this lesson book to reach a larger scope of readers and help those who may be beginners in this knowledge learn with ease.

**His Commandments are Righteous**

Most of us think we know what it means to be righteous, but do we really? Let’s take a look.

According to the following verse, what is the source of righteousness? Do we define righteousness or does God define it?

Psalms 119:172My tongue shall speak Your Word, for all Your Commandments are righteousness.

The commandments David is speaking of is “The Law” that came from the mouth of God to Moses while in the wilderness, they are God’s laws or instructions for His people. They were never meant to be only applicable to Jews nor are they done away with. These are His instructions on how to honor and draw near to Him.

How were they found righteous before God?

Luke 1:6  And they were both righteous before God, walking blameless in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord.

We see they were found righteous through obedience to all the commandments and ordinances of God. These are His instructions for obedience and judgements for disobedience.

How does Deuteronomy 4:8 define a great nation?

Deuteronomy 4:8And who is a great nation whose statutes and judgments are so righteous as all this Law which I set before you today?

When the commandments of God are not honored, judgments will come against that nation. This is known as “the blessings and the curses”. Obedience brings blessings while disobedience brings curses. Here is an exert from The Law that speaks of this:

Deuteronomy 29:24-26  even all nations shall say, Why has Jehovah done this to this land? For what is the heat of this great anger? Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of Jehovah, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt. For they went and served other gods, and worshiped them, gods whom they did not know, and who had not given to them any portion.

Psalms 96:5  For all the gods of the nations are idols; but Jehovah made the heavens.

You have just read references to “Commandments and Ordinances”, “Statutes and Judgements”, “The Law”, and “The Covenant of Jehovah”. Let’s review these terms before continuing our study on righteousness.

Commandments, Ordinances, Statues, and Judgements are basically just other words for His Instructions to us that make up “The Law”. This Law is known as “The Torah” in Hebrew. It was recorded by Moses after the Covenant was made at Mt. Sinai and consists of the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy.

At Mt. Sinai, God told the people He would be their God if they accepted the Covenant, which included all of the instructions He just gave them.

Let’s look at a few verses that show what took place after He spoke all these instructions:

Exodus 24:3  And Moses came and told the people all the Words of Jehovah, and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, All the words which Jehovah has said, we will do.

Exodus 24:4  And Moses wrote all the Words of Jehovah…

Exodus 24:7  And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the ears of the people. And they said, All that Jehovah has said we will do, and be obedient.

Exodus 24:8  And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which Jehovah has made with you concerning all these words.

Exodus 24:12  And Jehovah said to Moses, Come up to Me in the mountain, and be there. And I will give you tablets of stone, and the Law, and commandments which I have written, so that you may teach them.

These stone tablets contain the Ten Commandments that you are likely familiar with. These represent a summary of all The Law. The details of each commandment are located in The Torah or “Book of The Law”. Near the end of their time in the wilderness, Moses reviews this same Covenant with the next generation.

Deuteronomy 29:1  These are the words of the covenant which Jehovah commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb. …

Deuteronomy 29:10-15  You stand today, all of you, before Jehovah your God… so that you should enter into covenant with Jehovah your God, and into His oath, which Jehovah your God makes you today;  that He may establish you today for a people to Himself, and that He may be a God to you, as He has said to you, and as He has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.  Nor do I make this covenant and this oath with you only, but with him who stands here with us today before Jehovah our God, and also with him that is not here with us today.

The passages you have just read are very significant. You see explicitly that to enter into covenant with God, requires the oath or promise of obedience to all His instructions or commandments. If you agree to do this, He says He will be your God and you will be His people.

Did you notice this? “and also with him that is not here with us today”?

The Covenant extends to all descendants of Jacob living today. That includes not only to DNA descendants, but all those who wish to join into this Covenant first given to Abraham. The same Covenant is still in existence today. There has always been just One Covenant, One God, and One people that serve Him. The question is: Are you obedient to it?

Moses concludes the teaching of The Covenant with this:

Deuteronomy 30:10-20

for you shall listen to the voice of Jehovah your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the Law, and if you turn to Jehovah your God with all your heart and with all your soul. For this commandment which I command you today is not hidden from you, neither is it far off. … But the Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, so that you may do it. Behold! I have set before you today life and good, and death and evil, in that I command you today to love Jehovah your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, so that you may live and multiply. And Jehovah your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it. … I call Heaven and earth to record today against you. I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life, so that both you and your seed may live, so that you may love Jehovah your God, and that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him. For He is your life and the length of your days, so that you may dwell in the land which Jehovah swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give it to them.

Now that you have a better understanding of the origination of The Law of God (The Torah) and the Covenantal Oath that took place at Mt. Sinai, let’s resume our study about what it means to be righteous.

What does righteousness look like? How do we recognize a righteous man from everyone else?

Psalms 37:29-32The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell in it forever. The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, and his tongue talks of judgment. The Law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The wicked watches the righteous, and seeks to kill him.

We see “The Law of his God is in his heart”. He speaks wisdom and judgment. In other words, righteousness was not determined by his own heart or by what a pastor wrote up for a sermon, but is fully defined in The Law God gave us to follow. It does not change with the times in which we live. They were set forth once and He does not change.

Malachi 3:6 For I am Jehovah, I change not. Because of this you sons of Jacob are not destroyed.

Hebrews 13:8 Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever.

Isaiah 33:22 For Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our lawgiver, Jehovah is our king; He will save us.

Let’s examine the spiritual concept of clothed in righteousness verses nakedness.

Job 29:14  I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my judgment was like a robe and a diadem.

Revelation 3:18  I counsel you to buy from Me gold purified by fire, so that you may be rich; and white clothing, so that you may be clothed, and so that the shame of your nakedness does not appear. And anoint your eyes with eye salve, so that you may see.

Revelation 19:8  And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white. For the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints.

We just learned the commandments are righteous and obedience to them allows us to walk in righteousness. Now we see the righteousness of the saints equated with white clothing and fine linen. The absence of this white linen exposes our nakedness. Therefore, we see nakedness as being equated to disobedience to His commandments, breaking the oath that our ancestors took at Mt. Sinai, and a failure to draw near and honor Him. He warns us to anoint our eyes to remove the blinders that prevent us from seeing.

Do you remember this event?

Genesis 3:11-12  And He said, Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree which I commanded you that you should not eat?  And the man said, The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.

When Adam and Eve disobeyed the commandment of God to not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, their eyes were opened to their nakedness. They “lost” their “fine linen” due to disobedience. The sacrifice of innocent animals (for their blood) began as a way to cover over sin. Sin entered the world along with being cast out of the Garden and away from His presence. Degeneration of our bodies and the earth began. We look forward to a time when the whole earth is once again obedient to His Law and we live eternally in His presence. This will come as people become obedient and God clothes us in His fine linen that represents our righteousness.

This next verse has caused great confusion. The problem lies with the mistranslation of the Hebrew as “end” rather than “goal”. Now notice all of the verses you’ve just read align with Romans 6:16.

Romans 10:4-5  For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone who believes. For Moses writes of the righteousness which is of the Law, "The man who does those things shall live by them."  (It should read “Christ is the goal of the law for righteousness”)

Romans 6:16  Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

All His commandments (or instructions) are for righteousness and the keeping of them makes us wise. This is God’s definition of righteousness and wisdom. It is being obedient to His commandments, which are defined in The Law. The will of our Father is that we DO the commandments, not just talk about them. When you keep the commandments then you are putting on righteousness. You are clothing yourself in the White Linen of the Saints.

Let’s look at another point of confusion.

Romans 9:31-32  But Israel, who followed after a law of righteousness did not arrive at a law of righteousness. Why? Because it was not of faith, but as it were by the works of the Law. For they stumbled at that Stumbling-stone;

Why were they not considered righteous? The Law is not done away with. Paul gives us the answer. They were only “doing” The Law, going through the motions, without FAITH behind it, to back it up and give it substance. They were seeking their own righteousness through obedience to His instructions. This continues even to this day. We see those who make The Law their focus and “counting up good deeds” is always on their mind. And yet, they disregard those commands they feel are outdated of the times in which we live. Worse yet, they will readily acknowledge their lack of belief. The Law, now as then, becomes the focus and disregards God’s very existence.

Paul spoke frequently of this matter in the Renewed Covenant (incorrectly called the New Testament), but he is misunderstood today. He was teaching the people that Salvation is a free gift of God based on FAITH and not earned by how many “good works” one can do.

Faith means believing God sent His son to die for our sins and He was resurrected from the dead and is coming again. Faith means believing The Law and all Scripture was God-breathed and given to us. Faith therefore, includes BELIEF (Faith) and “walking out” that belief in obedience. Obedience is a result of our faith. Faith comes first. Then we want to please Him via our obedience.

Jesus is known as “The Living Torah”. He came to live, talk, and walk out The Torah of His Father. FIRST we have FAITH in God, the Father. Then we are brought near to Him in our desire to love Him and follow after Him. To walk as He walked. This love for what He has done for us now gives us the desire to want to walk in obedience to His Law. He kept His Father’s Law as did Paul and all the disciples.

This is how we show Him we love Him. Just as a child obeys his Father out of love for him and a desire to please him. A rebellious child brings chaos to the household and shows a lack of respect.

John 14:15  If you love Me, keep My commandments.

John 14:21  He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will reveal Myself to him.

<End of Session Break – Part 1>

**His Torah Gives Understanding**

Many associate understanding with knowledge and attribute both to educational achievement. Is this how God defines these attributes?

According to Proverbs 9:10, what is the source of wisdom?

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

The fear of Jehovah (this is God’s name) is the foundation for attaining wisdom. This fear, respect, and love, drives us to want to please Him.

What is “knowledge of the holy” that leads to understanding? Let’s first read Exodus 31:13-14, to see the relationship of His Sabbaths to holiness.

Exodus 31:13-14

Speak also to the sons of Israel, saying, Truly you shall keep My sabbaths. For it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, to know that I am Jehovah who sanctifies you.  You shall keep the Sabbath therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone that defiles it shall surely be put to death. For whoever does any work in it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

We see the Sabbath referred as holy for us. This should cause you to learn all you can about His Sabbaths. Yes, Sabbaths. There are multiple Sabbaths and not just Saturday. Each holy “feast” (known as the “Appointed Times”) He tells us to keep has a Sabbath associated with it. This is part of the “knowledge of the holy” that brings us understanding.

Confused? Where does one find this knowledge of the holy that brings understanding?

Psalms 119:104  Through Your Commandments I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

The commandments of God provide instructions on how to live righteously before Him. These instructions provide us “knowledge of the holy” that leads to more understanding. These instructions include the Sabbaths, the Appointed Times, the Ten Commandments and the details of how to interpret each of these Ten Commandments. Everything we need to know about how to relate to Him, draw near to Him, and be under His covering of protection, is within The Law, better known as “The Torah” in Hebrew.

The Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) is just one part of The Tanakh, which is the entire Hebrew Scriptures. It also consists of historical and prophetical writings. This Tanakh is “The Scriptures” that was in use at the time of Jesus, Paul, and all the disciples. The letters of Paul, Peter, etc. and the four Gospels, were never consider “The Scriptures” at that point in time. In fact, the Gospels hadn’t even been recorded yet.

Now let’s look at this verse again:

Psalms 119:104  Through Your Commandments I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way.

David says he hates every false way. This refers to a way contrary to what God has told them to do in His commandments. Can you identify some false ways? Have you ever practiced something that is not in The Scriptures (Bible)? If it is not in The Scriptures or you do something contrary to what is there, then it is a man-made law or man-made tradition. We are told to not add or subject from His Law. Many traditions have pagan roots.

Please read these verses about modifying His Word:

Matthew 5:19  Therefore whoever shall relax one of these commandments, the least, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of Heaven. But whoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of Heaven.

Proverbs 30:6  Do not add to His Words, lest He reprove you and you be found a liar.

Deuteronomy 12:32  All the things I command you, be careful to do it. You shall not add to it, nor take away from it.

Now, read these verses about traditions:

Galatians 1:14  And I progressed in Judaism beyond many contemporaries in my race, being much more a zealot of the traditions of my fathers.

Colossians 2:8  Beware lest anyone rob you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world, and not according to Christ.

Mark 7:7-13

However, they worship Me in vain, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men, the dippings of pots and cups. And many other such things you do.

And He said to them, Do you do well to set aside the commandment of God, so that you may keep your own tradition? For Moses said, "Honor your father and your mother." And, "Whoever curses father or mother, let him die the death."

But you say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, Corban! (that is, A gift to God, whatever you may profit by me) and you no longer allow him to do anything toward his father or mother, making the Word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have delivered. And you do many such things.

Can you prove what you have learned is written in Scripture or is it tradition? Does something in the Renewed Covenant (New Testament) conflict with something from The Tanakh (Old Testament)? If so, it is certainly in your interpretation of it or in the translation done by man.

This next verse speaks of “statues and judgments”. This is another name for The Law. The Law includes what curses will come if disobedient. These are the “judgments”. We call them “The Blessings and The Curses” and they are part of the Covenant.

Why does God want you to keep and do them?

Deuteronomy 4:5-6  Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as Jehovah my God commanded me, so that you should do so in the land where you go to possess it. And you shall keep and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

Do you see it? “I have taught you statutes and judgments… and you shall keep and do them… for this is your wisdom and your understanding.”

In Ecclesiastes 12:13, we see everything we’ve learned thus far summarized as two things. What are they?

Ecclesiastes 12:13  Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Fear God, and keep His commandments. For this is the whole duty of man.

We begin with FAITH in God, which leads us to a desire to please Him, just like our natural parents. We do this through obedience to His Word. These instructions are found primarily in The Torah although His entire Word is filled with Wisdom for us. This “Fear of God” causes us to diligently seek His Word and search our hearts.

<End of Session Break – Part 2>

**His Torah Gives Wisdom**

We have now learned the commandments of God are linked to righteousness. We have also seen them linked to understanding.

Furthermore, we have learned “The righteous speak wisdom” and “The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom”.

In Psalm 119:169, we see wisdom comes from “Your Word”. In Proverbs 4:5-7, we see wisdom and understanding associated with the words of His mouth. Those words are The Torah of Moses, also called The Law. They are His commandments or instructions to live by. Moses recorded these words in Genesis – Deuteronomy.

Psalm 119:169  “Let my cry come near to You, O Jehovah; give me wisdom according to Your Word.”

Proverbs 4:5-7 Get wisdom, get understanding; forget not; nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she shall preserve you; love her, and she shall keep you. Wisdom is the main thing; get wisdom; and with all your getting get understanding.

Let’s look at some more verses on WISDOM:

Proverbs 13:14  The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death.

Proverbs 28:7  Whoever keeps the law is a wise son…

Proverbs 3:21-23  My son, do not let them depart from your eyes; keep sound wisdom and judgment,  and they shall be life to your soul and grace to your neck; then you shall walk in your way safely, and your foot shall not stumble.

Job 28:28  And to man He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom! And to depart from evil is understanding!

James 1:5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and with no reproach, and it shall be given to him.

Jesus is known as “The Living Torah” because He came to show us how to live out those words. To show us the Torah that is written on stone is to become the Living Torah written on our heart. The Law is to be mixed with FAITH to be complete. The Jews were using the Torah to justify themselves through their own obedience and they had no faith with it. Paul explains this below:

Romans 3:31  Do we then make the Law void through faith? Let it not be! But we establish the Law.

Philippians 3:9  and be found in Him; not having my own righteousness, which is of the Law, but through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God by faith,

Let’s conclude this lesson on Attaining Righteousness by answering these questions:

1. What happens when individuals define wisdom and righteousness? Do we need the standard that God has provided?
2. These two Renewed Covenant (New Testament) verses also refer to “fear of the Lord”. Discuss what this means in light of all you have learned. How do you see yourself and your assembly in this context?

Acts 9:31  Then, indeed, the churches had rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and having been built up. And having gone on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were increased.

2 Corinthians 5:11  Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men. But we are revealed to God, and I trust also that we are revealed in your consciences.

1. Please read Romans chapters 6 and 7 and discuss it in the context of what you have learned in this lesson. A few notes of explanation have been included within these two chapters.

**Slaves to Righteousness - Romans 6:15-23**

What then? Shall we sin because we are not under Law, but under grace? Let it not be!

Do you not know that to whom you yield yourselves as slaves for obedience, you are slaves to him whom you obey; whether it is of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness.

But thanks be to our God that you were the slaves of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

Then being made free from sin, you became the slaves of righteousness.

(Remember, we discussed those who became enslaved by the law by counting good works to earn their salvation. This was the situation then and now. Paul is teaching first comes faith, then love and a desire to follow Him. Then we want to be obedient just as a child wants to please His Father.)

I speak in the manner of men because of the weakness of your flesh; for as you have yielded your members as slaves to uncleanness, and to lawless act unto lawless act, even so now yield your members as slaves to righteousness unto holiness.

For when you were the slaves of sin, you were free from righteousness.

(It is The Law that reveals sin. If no Law, then no awareness of sin. Blissful ignorance, but sin that leads to death. To learn more, read the lesson titled “What is Sin?”)

What fruit did you have then in those things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.

But now, being made free from sin, and having become slaves to God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end everlasting life.

(You are now free from sin by Faith and a desire to be obedient to His Law of drawing near to Him. Obedience is the fruit of holiness that leads to everlasting life.)

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**The Law and Sin - Romans 7:7-25**

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Let it not be said! But I did not know sin except through the law. For also I did not know lust except the law said, You shall not lust.

But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, worked in me all kinds of lust. For apart from law sin was dead.

For I was alive without the law once. But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

And the commandment, which was to life, was found to be death to me.

For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

So indeed the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

Then has that which is good become death to me? Let it not be! But sin, that it might appear to be sin, working death in me by that which is good; in order that sin might become exceedingly sinful by the commandment.

(You can see Paul struggling with his fleshly nature. We all do. It can be a struggle between what you want to do and what you know to do. The Word is in your heart. The Holy Spirit is in you encouraging and strengthening you to keep doing that which you know to do.)

For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

For that which I do, I know not. For what I desire, that I do not do; but what I hate, that I do.

If then I do that which I do not desire, I consent to the law that it is good.

But now it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing. For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I do not find.

For I do not do the good that I desire; but the evil which I do not will, that I do.

But if I do what I do not desire, it is no more I working it out, but sin dwelling in me.

I find then a law: when I will to do the right, evil is present with me.

(Paul is not calling The Law evil. He is saying his evil nature wants to do what he used to do. We battle our own flesh constantly. This is a test before us. Will we deny ourselves and serve God or will we place ourselves first. Who is “God” to us? The Commandment says “Place no other gods before Him”. Do we place ourselves before Him?)

For I delight in the Law of God according to the inward man;

but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin being in my members.

O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.