



Return to God's Righteousness

By Barbara L. Klika, MSW

Undershepherd

Personal Life Coach

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Earlier in this series, I wrote of our need for retraining, like the Israelites.

Clearly, from 1 Corinthians 10:11 and other passages, Sha'ul/Paul knew that we would again be enslaved under a system that is not of our God. All throughout time, His people have been in such a repetitive cycle: devotion to Him, increase and comfort, complacency and then rebellion toward God's ways, decline, and finally desperation causing them to turn back to Him. Seeing what is happening in the world, too often mirrored in the churches, should be enough to see that we are in the end stages of that cycle once again, but this time, perhaps for the final cycle before Messiah's return. We learned from Isaiah that our God not only KNOWS the end from the beginning but He has DECLARED it out of the beginning. (Isaiah 46:8-10; 48: 3,5)

Our path to return to righteousness begins at the beginning as we examine the principles taught from the beginning in the Word. The Author and Creator of all that is has set His standards. We examine the words of our Messiah, Who said that He did nothing except what the Father told Him to do, that His teachings are the same as his Father's teachings, that not one jot or tittle would be changed until Heaven and earth pass away.

Well, heaven and earth are certainly under duress but they haven't passed away as yet.

Herein lies a problem for many people. Having been told to read the Bible beginning in John, it is as though they build a house by starting with the roof. I believe there is a deep seated generational, institutional and familial bias or stronghold that has taken root which causes people to reject the OT as being invalid or even bad. There is nothing in the Word itself that says this, but rather the opposite!

This began in ancient history with Marcion, who taught of the God of Wrath of the OT and the God of Mercy of the NT. He was rejected by the church fathers for this heresy, among others, but that root of bitterness, hostility and suspicion toward the OT remains.

Too many modern teachers of the Word promote this false teaching in various subtle and not so subtle ways. As a trained Bible study teacher, I am well aware of admonitions NOT to simply "cherry pick" a verse to support a position and that we ARE to put all into the appropriate context. Unfortunately, cherry picking verses and taking them outside of context is exactly what IS being done.

During my two year teacher training, I studied the OT intensely, but all the while, I kept thinking that I couldn't wait until we got to the "good stuff" in the NT! When we got there, I saw over and over that the NT is simply a confirmation of the character and plan of God...what He said from the beginning, He carried out. If you start reading in John, and then just cherry pick a verse or two from the OT, you will never know of the consistency and wholeness of the entire Word.

If you succumb to the false teaching that the OT is obsolete and not for today, you will not know how to define words that appear in the NT. Indeed, many words have been taken out of context and redefined in our modern sense. (I believe this is one root of the multiple denominations) Righteousness and holiness are primary examples of misunderstanding.

As it would be challenging to build the roof first and then try to put the walls and the foundation under the roof, afterwards, so it is challenging for us today to go back and get a good look at the foundation of the word. But we must do this if we are to be found under the protection of our Elohim, so that He can set our feet on a Rock, above our enemies. (Psalm 27)

The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous, and his ears toward their cry. Psalm 34:15

Common Christian definitions of righteousness are influenced by the Greek or western mindset and deal only with the fact of what our Messiah has done for us; that we are made righteous through His finished work. While this is true, it neglects the practical outworking of what it means to be righteous, leaving it only as a vague abstract concept. Our Father chose a Hebrew language and culture to convey His Truths: a culture where to hear is to obey; to know is to do.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. James 1:22

Tzadek and *yasher*; righteous and upright in Hebrew, are words that help convey a picture of righteousness. To be righteous is to walk a straight or upright path. What path is straight and right? The path that follows the Torah/OT, which is commonly called "The Law," but literally means "the Righteous Teachings" of our God. Not following His "Law" is called lawlessness.

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. 1 John 3:4

Our Messiah perfectly walked out His life on earth, observing the Righteous Teachings of our God. He honored Shabbat, dietary guidelines, and all of the Feasts laid out in the Word; after all, they ARE all about Him! He affirmed and upheld them and commanded His Followers to do the same. If He had changed anything, by definition within the context of the Word, specifically Deuteronomy 13, He would have been a false prophet.

Earlier in this series, I defined holiness. It is from the Hebrew *kadosh*, and means "to be set apart for a special purpose." Our Greek thinking gives us only an abstract idea of being holy as being pious or religious, but the Hebraic understanding shows us that it carries with it the sense of being separate from other things. To be "set apart" for our God, means that we will look and walk differently than other people who are not set apart for Him. They may be set apart for another purpose, such as that of the evil one. The key element is what or Who you are set apart for! This has definitely NOT gone out of style.

Next time: Righteous walking will be most obvious in whether or not we accept the covenant promises within keeping His appointed times, especially Shabbat, the holidays we observe and the food we eat.

Questions? Contact us at info@set-apart-ministries.org!