

“The Righteousness of God Outside the Law”

In Hebrews chapter 10, the inspired writer speaks of the relationship of the Law of Moses to the things that would come to pass through the work of Messiah:

“the law having *a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things*, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect ...” (Heb. 10:1).

From these words, we learn that the Law testified to “things” that were outside of itself - i.e. it did not contain the exact likeness, or “very image” of what could come, but it foreshadowed them. Like as in a shadow only the basic outline is seen, with none of the detail, so the Law provided an outline of things to come in Jesus Christ.

This same point is made in Romans chapter 3, the New Testament reading for the day, following the Bible Companion. There we read:

“ ... by the law is the knowledge of sin. *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets*; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:20-22).

That is to say, there was a revelation of God’s Righteousness outside of (i.e. “without”) the Law, yet which nevertheless was testified by the Law. That is the Righteousness which is imputed because of faith in Christ Jesus, as distinct from the Righteousness of the Law, achieved by obedience - which no man could obtain, because of the weakness of human nature.

There are many ways in which the things of the Law foreshadowed the work of Messiah, particularly in it’s ordinances concerning sacrifices, and relationships between neighbours, and Yahweh himself. Messiah declared that “all the Law and the Prophets” hung upon these two principles – the love of God, and the love of neighbour. In our considerations here, we shall look to the life of king David, and see in him a living parable that spoke of these things.

The record of 1st Samuel recounts for our learning how Saul, the people’s king, sought to slay David, who had been anointed to take the throne in his stead. So in these things, we have a pattern, or *type* of things to come in Messiah. Just as the authorities sought to destroy David, even so the princes of this world united together to seek Messiah’s destruction (see Acts 4:27). But the pattern goes further, for we read in 1 Samuel chapter 22, how that in the time of his absence from the Land, those who were discontented with the things of this life sought after him, and took refuge with him in the cave of Adullam:

“David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him. And every one that was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he became a captain over them ... “ (1 Sam. 22:1-2).

After a similar fashion, in the absence of Messiah (i.e. the Anointed who has been chosen to replace this world's system of government) from the earth, men and women who are discontented with the emptiness and vanity of the things of this life choose to leave behind the pleasures of Sin, and take up their position with Messiah, outside of the camp. So Hebrews chapter 11 describes those of David's spirit who literally went out to dwell in caves, that they were those "whom the world was not worthy: they *wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth*. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:38-40). In these things we have foreshadowed the way in which man would seek Yahweh's Anointed outside of the Israelitish Law and encampment, to find refuge with him, as they patiently waited with him for the time to come when he would be received as king over all of the people.

We therefore, seek to be like those worthies of old, who had no continuing city, but rather sought after the Jerusalem of the Age to Come, a city of glory governed by Messiah and his brethren. As "strangers and sojourners" (cp. Psa. 39:12), we have no allegiance to the powers of this world, but instead choose to be separate – even if that means enduring physical hardship – as we look forward to better days that will soon come upon the earth, when Messiah shall come out of his place of exile to reign over all the world from Jerusalem.

Another way in which David foreshadowed later things that would come to pass "outside the camp," is seen in his dealings with the Ark of the Covenant, and the means by which he brought it back into the land. 2 Samuel chapter 6 describes how that "they brought in the Ark of Yahweh, and set it in his place, *in the midst of the tabernacle that David had pitched for it*: and David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before Yahweh" (2 Sam. 6:17).

In these words, we find that David did not restore the Ark back to its place in the Tabernacle of the Congregation, but that rather he pitched another tabernacle for it. That this is so can be seen by considering a number of passages. 2 Chronicles chapter 1 tells us that:

"Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon: for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of Yahweh had made in the wilderness. But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjath-jearim to the place which David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem" (2 Chron. 3-4).

It is clear then, that David constructed a second tabernacle to house the Ark, and so provided a place and system of worship that was outside of the Mosaic system of things. So 1 Chronicles 16 describes that there was a division of priests appointed to look after the affairs of this second tabernacle, distinct from the priests that offered sacrifices under the Mosaic Law:

"and he appointed certain of the Levites to minister before the ark of Yahweh, and to record, and to thank and praise Yahweh Elohim of Israel"

and again:

"so he left there before the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required" (1 Chron. 16:4, 37).

What we find in this place is that whilst the offering up of sacrifice continued as per the Mosaic Law at the Tabernacle of the Congregation, the singers and musicians (the family of Asaph) ministered before the second Tabernacle, pitched by David. Therefore it was not set up for the offering up of Sacrifice, but rather pointed forward to the way in which thanksgiving and praise would be offered outside of the Law. Even so, the writer to the Hebrews instructs:

“Let us go forth therefore unto him *without the camp*, bearing his reproach. For *here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come*. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, *the fruit of our lips* giving thanks to his Name” (Heb. 13:13-16).

Interestingly, whilst David’s tabernacle foreshadowed worship outside of the scope of the Law, it was set up at Jerusalem. We might think it more fitting for it to be outside the city, which would superficially seem to be more appropriate. But when all the facts are brought into view, we see that this is not the case at all. David’s tabernacle foreshadowed the worship of the Age to Come, when the Mosaic ordinances have found their fulfilment in Christ, and when folk will no longer worship under the Old Covenant. Replacing the Mosaic system in its entirety, it is most appropriate indeed for it to be positioned in Jerusalem. In fact, the prophet Isaiah refers to this, when speaking of the coming order of things:

“... in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth *in the tabernacle of David*, judging and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness” (Isa. 16:5).

There is an appropriateness in David foreshadowing principles established outside of the Law, for he himself obtained forgiveness according to the principles of the New Covenant, and not according to the Law. Psalm 51 describes his plea for forgiveness:

“Have mercy upon me, O Elohim, *according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies* blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is ever before thee” (Psa. 51:1-3).

Notice here: David did not ask for forgiveness upon the basis of him offering animals Sacrifice. Rather it was “according to the multitude of thy tender mercies”. This was because there was no sacrifice under the Law which could be offered for adultery and murder – David’s offences. So he continues in Psalm 51:

“for *thou desirest not sacrifice*; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart*, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psa. 51:16-17)

David found forgiveness in the sight of God upon the basis of his confession of sin, and contrition before God. Recognising there was no sacrifice for his sin under the Mosaic code, he threw himself upon the mercy of Yahweh, and prayed for his transgression to be blotted out upon the basis of mercy and lovingkindness.

Again, Psalm 32 shows the same spirit of humility:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom Yahweh imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no

guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my groaning all the day long ... ***I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.*** I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Yahweh; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah” (Psa. 32:1-5).

Psalm 51 records David’s confession of sin, and prayer for mercy, whereas Psalm 32 records David’s thankfulness that his sin was forgiven. When he was silent, his conscience afflicted him severely, but once he had made confession (through the instigation of Nathan the Prophet), he was himself “blessed” that Yahweh did not impute iniquity to him, rather forgiving his sin instead.

When we come to consider Romans chapter 4 therefore, in the context of the Righteousness of God being manifested outside of the Law, it is most appropriate indeed for the inspired words of David to be brought into view:

“even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Rom. 4:5-8).

David experienced such a thing first hand: the Old Covenant could not save him. But according to the principles of the New Covenant, through faith in Messiah, he nevertheless found forgiveness in the sight of Yahweh, and having righteousness imputed to him, rather than sin, he experienced the blessedness of such a man as he describes.

When considering the example of David, we must lay alongside it our own circumstance and spirit. “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). There is nothing that we can do to remedy that fact: the Law brought a knowledge of sin, but could not remove it. But we trust in the greatest declaration of the Father’s Righteousness of all – as it is seen in our Lord Jesus Christ:

“being ***justified freely by his grace*** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, ***to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past***, through the forbearance of God. ***To declare, I say at this time, His Righteousness*** that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:24-26).

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