

Jehovah Tsidkenu (The Lord Our Righteousness)

In our contemporary world beset by moral relativism and confusion, the quest for righteousness takes on profound significance. The name “Jehovah Tsidkenu”, meaning “The Lord Our Righteousness”, reveals God’s nature as the ultimate standard of righteousness and highlights our desperate need for His divine assistance. Throughout Scripture, we find a clear progression of God’s revelation concerning righteousness—from the lives of the patriarchs to the fulfillment of the law in Jesus Christ. This sermon invites us to acknowledge the depth of our need and to understand how we can achieve righteousness through faith in Christ alone.

Righteousness, in the biblical sense, reflects God’s moral perfection and His authority as the Creator. It is not merely an abstract principle but the essence of God’s character. As Psalm 119:137 (KJV) states, “Righteous art thou, O Lord; and upright are thy judgments.” This acknowledgment establishes that God is the ultimate standard against which all of humanity is measured. The moral parameters set by God are unwavering, reflecting His holiness, integrity, and justice. However, we must confront a sobering truth regarding our human condition. Romans 3:10-12 (KJV) states: “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God.” This passage reveals that our inherent sinfulness disqualifies us from achieving righteousness on our own. The holiness of God creates an insurmountable chasm between Him and humanity, emphasizing our profound need for a Savior.

Abraham: The Model of Faith

To understand God’s redemptive plan, we look to Abraham, the father of faith. In Genesis 12:1-3 (KJV), God calls Abraham to leave his homeland with a remarkable promise, saying, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.” Abraham’s willingness to obey God's command illustrates the foundational principle that genuine righteousness is initiated through faith and obedience. Abraham’s departure from Ur of the Chaldees symbolizes more than a geographical relocation; it epitomizes a rejection of the superficial righteousness embodied by the idolatry and sin of his homeland. In responding to God’s call, Abraham steps into a covenant relationship, trusting in the promises of God despite uncertainty. His journey is a testament that righteousness is rooted in faith.

Encounter with Melchizedek

Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18-20 showcases a pivotal moment that foreshadows the coming of Christ. Melchizedek, identified as the king of Salem and a priest of the Most High God, appears suddenly and blesses Abraham, showcasing the dual roles of priest and king—roles that Jesus would fulfill perfectly. The significance of this encounter is profound; it demonstrates that true righteousness originates from God and is recognized by humanity through faith. Jerusalem becomes the ground zero of righteousness because the King of Righteousness, Jesus, dwells there.

When Abraham gives Melchizedek a tithe, it symbolizes the acknowledgment of divine authority over personal achievement. This act of submission highlights the necessity of recognizing that genuine righteousness cannot be self-generated but must come through divine revelation and grace.

The Broken Cisterns: Israel's Rebellion

Despite the covenant established with Abraham, the Jewish people continually turned away from God. The lament of God through Jeremiah provides a snapshot of this rebellion. Jeremiah 2:13 (KJV) states, “For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” This vivid imagery compares God to a fountain of living water—an eternal source of sustenance—while the broken cisterns symbolize futile human attempts to establish righteousness apart from Him. The people forsook the fountain of life, seeking satisfaction in their own efforts and worldly pursuits. The broken cisterns represent every effort to attain righteousness through self-reliance, which ultimately leads to spiritual emptiness. Self-righteousness offers no true satisfaction; it creates a façade of fulfillment while neglecting the soul's genuine need for divine righteousness.

God, in His mercy, calls His people to return to Him. This illustrates His unwavering character and desire for a relationship with humanity. The call serves as a reminder that no matter how far we stray, we are invited back to the source of our righteousness. Jeremiah 3:12 (KJV) captures this beautiful invitation: “Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever.” God’s grace extends even to those who have turned away, promising restoration and renewal.

King Saul: The Danger of Presumptuous Righteousness

The story of King Saul serves as a poignant example of the peril of self-reliance and the consequences of disobedience. In 1 Samuel 13, we find Saul facing the Philistine army, and in his impatience, he chooses to offer a sacrifice without waiting for the prophet Samuel. This rash decision represents a striking failure to adhere to God's command. When confronted by Samuel, Saul is rebuked in 1 Samuel 13:13 (KJV): "Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God." His attempt to establish a form of righteousness outside of God's prescribed order highlights a significant truth: no one can assume the role of priest or offer sacrifices on their own terms. Saul's misguided actions ultimately lead to the forfeiture of his kingship and illustrate the futility of relying on personal righteousness rather than obedience to God.

The dire outcomes of Saul's actions remind us that God is sovereign and that His authority must be respected. Our attempts to negotiate our own terms of righteousness can lead to spiritual blindness and loss of God's favor. Saul's story exemplifies the dangers that ensue when we prioritize our understanding of righteousness over God's revealed will. For 1500 years, God established a sacrificial system as a means for Israel to atone for sins, pointing toward the ultimate sacrifice that would be fulfilled in Christ. This system required animals to be offered at the temple, symbolizing the seriousness of sin and the cost of righteousness.

Jerusalem: The City of the Great King

Jerusalem held a significant role in God's redemptive narrative. In Matthew 5:35 (KJV), Jesus refers to Jerusalem as "the city of the great King." This city became the focal point of God's plan for redemption, where sacrifices were made in adherence to the law. However, as powerful as the sacrificial system was, it was but a shadow of the reality that would be fully realized in Jesus. Hebrews 10:4 (KJV) clearly states, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." While the sacrifices were a means for temporary covering of sin, they could not bring about lasting righteousness. Each sacrifice pointed forward to the day when the true, perfect sacrifice would come—Jesus Christ.

The Prophetic Promise: Jesus as Our Righteousness

The prophetic voice of Jeremiah brings hope with the promise of a “righteous Branch.” In Jeremiah 23:5-6 (KJV), we read, “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper.” This prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus, who embodies the ultimate righteousness that God requires. In John 1:29 (KJV), John the Baptist proclaims, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Jesus is not merely a priest; He is the perfect sacrifice, the Lamb without blemish who bore the weight of our sins on the cross. His atoning death provides the means for us to be reconciled with God and restored to righteousness. Through faith in Christ, we are clothed with His righteousness. Philippians 3:9 (KJV) declares, “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.” This indicates that our standing before God is not based on our merit but solely on our faith in His provision through Jesus.

The journey from Abraham to Jesus underscores the central truth of our faith: Jehovah Tsidkenu, the Lord Our Righteousness, stands as the ultimate source of righteousness we desperately need. As we navigate the complexities of life, we must acknowledge that true righteousness cannot be attained through our self-efforts or worldly standards. Instead, we are called to embrace the righteousness offered to us through faith in Christ. Romans 1:17 (KJV) affirms, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” This verse encapsulates the essence of our dependence on God’s righteousness—a righteousness that is revealed and available to us through faith.

The Transformative Power of Righteousness

As we grasp the depth of what it means to be clothed in Christ’s righteousness, we begin to understand the transformative power it holds in our lives. When we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, He not only forgives us our sins but also imparts His righteousness to us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 (KJV) states, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Our identity changes; we are no longer defined by our past failures or attempts at righteousness but instead by Christ’s perfect standing before God.

Living in Light of Righteousness

Understanding that we are clothed in Christ's righteousness calls us to live in a manner worthy of that calling. Ephesians 4:1 (KJV) urges us, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." This means that our lives should reflect the righteousness we have received. As we dwell in God's presence and allow the Holy Spirit to transform us, our actions, thoughts, and attitudes should align with His character. Furthermore, as recipients of God's righteousness, we bear the responsibility to share this message with others. In a world desperate for truth and hope, we are called to be ambassadors of Christ, proclaiming His righteousness to a broken world. Romans 10:13-15 (KJV) reminds us, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"

Let us not remain silent about the life-giving truth of God's righteousness. Instead, let us boldly declare that Jesus Christ is the answer to humanity's search for righteousness—a righteousness that is not earned but freely given to all who believe. As we conclude this message, may we reflect on the profound truth that Jehovah Tsidkenu—The Lord Our Righteousness—extends to us through Jesus Christ. We are reminded that our righteousness is not based on our performance or abilities but rests solely in the finished work of Christ on the cross. This truth brings freedom from the burden of striving for acceptance and opens the door to a life of peace and assurance. In light of this righteousness, let us approach God with confidence, engage in His purpose for our lives, and share His message of hope with those around us. May our hearts overflow with gratitude and praise for the one who has redeemed us and established us as the righteousness of God in Him.