

# Is Any Man Righteous On Earth?

ALTHOUGH men naturally are born into the world as sinners, it is quite possible for them to attain righteousness. A man is said to be righteous when he practices not his own righteousness but that of God according to the Scriptures. That such men had existed and are still existing in this evil world is a fact that is well established in the Holy Bible.

In order to check the loose conduct of some people and make them realise that in Salem City -the Headquarters of the GKS -immorality is not tolerated, there is the warning in a Public Notice issued in January 1969 for information of visitors which reads in part:

"The GKS believes more in Christian practice than in theory. We forbid as of faith based on the Bible all types of scanty women's dresses or what are known today as mini-dresses, and men's clothing that almost expose their secret or private parts, in Salem City. God is against nakedness and/or exposure of certain parts of the body in public. It is a SIN.

We are a people who believe strongly in high morals, and are therefore opposed to ANYTHING that excites to sexual immorality.- Matthew, 5: 28; 1st Corinthians 10: 8; Ephesians 5: 1-7.

Every Christian is advised to "possess his vessel (body) in sanctification and honour", and that "he no longer live the rest of his time – in the flesh to the lust of men, but to the will of God."- 1st Thessalonians 4: 1-5; 1st Peter 4: 1-3; see also Titus 2: 11-14.

Purely on scriptural and medical grounds, smoking of tobacco in any shape or form is not allowed in Salem City. The saying, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do", is universally known. And the Bible says, "Custom to whom custom" is due.

We do not allow people to spit or pass water anyhow or anywhere in Salem City as it is un-hygienic and above all, contrary to cleanliness as enjoined in the Bible. (2nd Corinthians 7: 1; Galatians 5: 19,21) Visitors are therefore advised to pass water or spit only at the urinal or toilet. All we are after is orderliness and cleanliness, and any sincere person will, no doubt, agree that this practical effort is necessary in order to attain holiness by the grace and power of God. In the worship of Almighty God, serious and faithful Christians aim at becoming holy as enjoined by God Himself who said; "Be ye holy for I am holy." – 1st Peter 1: 15, 16.

It is gratifying that many people expressed appreciation for this notice and for the discipline in the GKS. But some asked: "Can sinners ever be holy in this sinful world ?"

## Ignorance

Owing to ignorance of the Scriptures, certain people are of the opinion that since all men are sinners no one is nor can be righteous. As a result of this some consider it not necessary for anyone to give himself so much to religious activities. And when they see those who are zealous in the service of God and who are making efforts to keep His commandments they often remark that all they know is that nobody is righteous or holy.

In the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 7, verse 20, it is written: "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." And St. Paul stated: "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." -Romans 3: 10, 23.

These texts just quoted are those certain people rely upon to discourage others from practising righteousness or from being religious. Both King Solomon and Paul the apostle of Jesus Christ who under divine inspiration made the statements quoted above, were quite aware of the fact that righteousness is attainable and that righteous people had existed and would continue to be in this world. What they said were not intended to make anyone develop a feeling of defeatism over sin nor were they stated to show that righteousness is beyond the reach of men.

Solomon did not actually say that there is no just or righteous man on earth but that there is none who does not sin at all. In the same chapter 7 of Ecclesiastes he said: "All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness." (verse 15) This shows that he knew that there were just or righteous people on earth. And he too stated in his Proverbs: "The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable: but the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness."- Proverbs 10: 24, 32. There is a lot more of such references to the righteous in the Proverbs. Furthermore, in Psalm 34: 15-17, it is written: "The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry. The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles." This was confirmed by St. Peter in his first epistle. (1 Pet. 3: 12) Well, if anybody cannot be righteous why were these inspired statements, apart from several others in the Scriptures, made with reference to the righteous?

## Understanding

It is clearly stated in the Holy Bible that through the disobedience of Adam, the entire human race, with the exception of Jesus Christ whose case is quite different, was tainted with sin. King David who was the father of Solomon, said: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm, 51: 5) And St. Paul stated: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."-Rom 5: 12.

Let us take our minds back to our earlier reference to Romans chapter 3. An understanding of the text would make us know that St. Paul was not saying that no one was righteous on earth. His statement at verse 10 to the effect that "there is none righteous", is a quotation from the Psalms in the Hebrew Scriptures otherwise known as the Old Testament. It is from Psalm 14: 1 which runs thus: "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.*" This has thrown more light on the point in that, those among whom none "doeth good" or is righteous, are the fools who say in their hearts that there is no God.

Sin is the cause of godlessness which has been proved to have taken root both among the natural Jews and the Gentiles. Concerning such godless people, St. Paul added: "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." (verse 11) It will be wrong to interpret this verse to mean that there is nobody on earth that seeks after God. The more one reads the verses that follow in that text the clearer it becomes that the apostle was writing about the wicked who have no fear of God.

St. Paul whose spiritual intelligence is universally acknowledged, was fully in the know that there were righteous men on earth and that there would continue to be. Righteousness means uprightness or the quality and character of conforming in disposition and conduct to the divine

standard of right and justice as enunciated in the laws of God.

Though men by nature are born in sin, if anyone after conversion worships God with godly fear in truth and endeavours with faith in God to refrain from sin, he is a righteous man. "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth." (John 9: 31) It is to such people who are righteously inclined, God directed this address: "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revil- ings." – Isaiah 51: 7.

We can therefore understand that the worshipper who does the will of God and whose prayer is heard by Him (God) is a righteous man. And St. Peter said: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open, unto their prayers." – 1st Peter 3: 12.

## Righteous People

There are many examples of such righteous people in the Bible and mention can be made herein of only a few. Abel was a righteous man. Concerning him St. Paul himself wrote: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh." – Hebrews 11: 4.

Noah is also a good example. Despite the fact that the inhabitants of the earth were wholly given to wickedness in his days and the earth was filled with violence, yet Noah remained 'a just man and perfect in his generations'. (Genesis 6: 5-12) Giving the reason why Noah with his family of seven was saved from that historic, colossal devastation or destruction of the ungodly, God said to him: "For thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation."-Genesis 7: 1; see also Hebrews 11: 7; 2nd Peter 2: 5.

It was the righteousness of Lot that made God deliver him from the doom that was the fate of Sodom and Gomorrha. Of him St. Peter wrote: "And (God) delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds)." -Read 2nd Peter 2: 6-9.

There are also the instances of people like *Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David, Zechariah, Sarah, Ruth, Abigail, Elisabeth* and a host of others both in the Old and New Testaments, whose righteousness, space will not permit us to dilate upon, Men can attain to righteousness by keeping the judgments or laws of God. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy word." (Psalm 119: 9) And Isaiah the prophet stated: "For when Thy (God's) judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness," – Isaiah 26: 9.

## Christian Era

We in this Christian Era are particularly favoured in that we have every opportunity of hearing the saving gospel so that through our faith in Jesus Christ we may be made righteous in order to obtain the justification of life. And St. Paul wrote: "*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*" – Romans 5: 18, 19.

It pays to practise righteousness. God said: "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him:

for they shall eat the fruit of their doings.” (Isaiah 3: 10) If there were no righteous men on earth, there would have been no need for this statement giving assurance of hope for the reward of the righteous. Moreover, it is written: “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.”-Isaiah 32: 17.

Let us therefore make efforts seriously by God’s power to refrain from sin and do things that are pleasing to Him. Jesus Christ said: “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Matthew, 5: 6) As Noah and Lot were delivered from the troubles of their times, so shall those who fear God and do righteousness in this our time be saved from the Great Tribulation of God that is facing the whole world. “Riches profit not in the day of (God’s) .wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.”- Proverbs 11: 4.

All the meek of the earth are therefore admonished to seek the Lord, to seek righteousness so that they may be covered or protected in the day of His anger which is fast approaching.-Zeph. 2: 3.

What is more, Jesus Christ said: “For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of heaven.”-Matthew, 5: 20. See also Psalm, 106: 3 and Matthew, 6: 33.