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THE NATURE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

MAN NEEDS RIGHTEOUSNESS

One of the things which we are all aware of is the fact that without holiness we shall never inherit eternal life or see God. In the book of Hebrews, Paul says in chapter 12 verse 14,

“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14)

All Christendom knows that God is righteous, He is holy, and He is totally contrary to sin. Even if the Bible had not told us, we know instinctively that in order to see God we have to be righteous, and from the beginning of time the search of humanity has been to find this righteousness which qualifies man for eternal life in fellowship with God.

The first pitiful effort to find, it was made by Adam and Eve. When they discovered that sin had made them unfit to appear in God's presence, the Bible says that they sewed fig leaves together, and by putting on garments made of leaves they tried to make themselves fit for companionship with God. Of course as soon as God appeared, they knew it was not enough and they ran to hide from His presence.

MAN SEEKS RIGHTEOUSNESS IN STRANGE WAYS

People have tried in many ways to obtain righteousness. Back during the middle ages, there was a Catholic monk by the name of Simeon. In seeking righteousness, he climbed up on a pole, and stayed there for thirty-seven years. At first his pole was three meters high, then he moved to one six meters tall, then eleven meters and finally twenty meters high as he tried to get away from the crowds which came to see him. He remained there through the sun, the rain, and the snow. Food

would be passed up to him in a bucket. Here is what history records of this man:

"Simeon the Stylite spent thirty-seven years of his life standing on a pillar. He ate as little as possible, and did his utmost never to sit or lie down: he would tie himself to a pole fixed to the top of his pillar so as to sleep upright, or, on laxer occasions, he would sleep leaning on the balustrade that also prevented him from blowing off his perch during storms. He had no roof, and no walls apart from the open balustrade; a leather garment, long hair, and a beard were all he had for protection against the elements ..."

"He prayed all night, bowing frequently and low (this being his only exercise): one witness stopped counting after his 1,244th bow. He slept very briefly towards dawn, and was ready to greet the crowds that thronged around him every day ..." (<http://gvanv.com/compass/arch/v1402/saint.html>)

This man believed that the greater his self-abuse, the greater would be his degree of righteousness and his approval in God's sight. So tightly was this rope bound about his body that it was embedded in the flesh which rotted around it. Worms found their way into ulcers on his legs. For a year during which he stood on one foot, he replaced the maggots that fell from his sores and said, *"Eat what God has given you."* (The Other Side of Rome - by John B. Wilder, p. 60)

This strange and misguided person was given the label of "saint" and is today known as "St. Simeon the Stylites." What was this man seeking as he abused himself in this terrible way? He was looking for purification of soul, for righteousness, for a way to please God. And what did he gain from it? Nothing. It never made him one degree more righteous.

In every religion on this planet, people are looking for a way to find righteousness, a way to obtain God's favour and eternal life. In some religions, we see men lying on beds of nails, abusing their bodies to purify their souls and we wonder how people could be so misguided. But is this any different from the approach of many who call themselves Christians? For many of us, even the things which we eat, become a part of the search for righteousness. We dress right, we eat right, we

carefully obey the rules of the church, so that we may become righteous, that God may be pleased with us, and so bestow his blessings. These things may have some benefit but if we do them in order to obtain salvation, in what way are we different from pagans? The works may be different, but the principle is the same.

PHARISAICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS NOT GOOD ENOUGH

Some of the hardest statements in the Bible were made by Jesus, and in Matthew chapter 5, we find a few of them. Matthew 5:20 says,

“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)

Let us remember the kind of life that the Pharisees lived. They paid tithe on mint, and anise, and cummin, they fasted twice per week, they were always praying, always giving something to the poor and if you wanted to find people whose lives were outwardly righteous, then you had to look for the Pharisees. Now Jesus comes and he says, "this is not good enough, if you don't have a greater righteousness, it is impossible to enter the kingdom." I guess many of those people were thinking, "this is a hard saying, but what shall we do? I guess we just have to try harder!"

Jesus went on to say that the one who was a murderer was not just the one who took somebody's life, but even the man who was angry with his brother without a cause was already guilty of murder. A man doesn't become an adulterer by going to bed with somebody else's wife, but by just having the desire or intention in his mind. In many churches, there are men, who think about this, and recognize that they are not fit for heaven, but they keep hoping that someday, by hard work and careful discipline, and re-educating their minds, they may be able to bring their very thoughts under discipline and so be qualified for heaven.

But look at what Jesus said at the end of that chapter; He went on to make things even more difficult. In verse 48, He says,

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)

What do you do when you read a statement like this? Some people throw up their hands and give up. But the average church person says, "I must try harder. Even to be as perfect as God is, I must TRY harder."

There was a time when I was in that hole, I tried and I tried. Why? I wanted to be filled with the holy spirit. I wanted the favour of God, I wanted my life to be blessed like Enoch's, and I tried and tried to live perfectly. But with all my efforts, the best that I could ever arrive at, was the hope that maybe someday I would get there. It was always 'maybe,' and, 'I hope', and, 'God has to do something special.' I never seemed any closer to that mark, no matter how hard I tried.

WHY DOES MAN SEEK IN THESE WRONG WAYS?

The truth is that many of these people who make these desperate efforts at self discipline in the effort to please God, are totally sincere. They truly are doing what they think God requires. The problem is not always that they delight in self-abuse, but rather, that they are genuinely ignorant of the nature of true Righteousness and how to obtain it. It is critical that we understand this for if we do not get this right, we may put in the most strenuous efforts and find at the end that it was all in vain.

TWO CONCEPTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

In order to come to grips with this issue, let us consider the question, what is righteousness? How shall we define it? One of the more popular definitions says that, "righteousness is right doing." Many Christians have felt that this definition is a very good description of righteousness because of course in 1 John 3:4 the Bible says,

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.” (1 John 3:4)

So it seems a matter of simple reasoning. We conclude that if sin is the transgression of the law, then obviously righteousness is the opposite of sin and therefore must be simply, obedience to the law. So, we conclude that in order to avoid sin, we simply stop disobeying the law and in order to obtain righteousness, we simply obey the law.

On the surface this seems a reasonable conclusion and in fact, with some slight variations, this is the basic foundation principle on which every NON-CHRISTIAN religion is based, though in most cases the rules which are to be obeyed, are different. The sad fact is that Christians have become so misguided, so unfamiliar with the principles of the gospel that they have embraced the same basic philosophy as the heathen in seeking salvation. The basic idea behind this philosophy is that, being saved or being lost is something we earn by what we do, by how well we obey.

RIGHTEOUSNESS IN THE LAW

Of course when we define sin and righteousness in terms of what we do, then our reference point must be the law, for the law is God's standard by which He makes us know what is right and what is wrong. But let us look at what the Bible says in Galatians 3:11, 12:

“But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.” (Galatians 3:11-12)

Let us consider what we are told here. How do the just live? It says the just live by **faith**, but the **law** is not of faith. So obviously the just cannot live by the law. In seeking righteousness, we will not find it if we seek it on the basis of obedience to the law. Verse 21 says,

“Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” (Galatians 3:21)

What these verses tell us is that God might have made righteousness available through the law if it was possible. But such a thing is impos-

sible and therefore in seeking righteousness we cannot relate to the law. Many Christians see their religious experience in light of the law, and their relationship with God in light of the law. If they have managed to be reasonably obedient to the requirements of the law, they feel that they are in God's favour, but if they have been disobedient, they feel that they are alienated from God and need to start obeying before God can accept them. In building on this foundation, they are building on something which cannot work, for by the deeds of the law, no flesh shall be justified. Righteousness cannot be produced by our obedience to the law, even though righteousness is "right doing."

RIGHTEOUSNESS WITHOUT THE LAW

This point is further emphasized in Romans 3:21:

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." (Romans 3:21)

Notice what this verse says. It speaks about God's righteousness, and it says this is **WITHOUT THE LAW**. This is a strange phrase; what does the apostle Paul mean when he says, "without the law?" What he is saying is that there is righteousness that exists, and obtaining it has nothing to do with the law. How is that possible? This righteousness is declared to be the righteousness of God. Now if it is "without the law," obtaining it cannot be on the basis of observance of the law, or relationship to the law. It cannot depend on our right-doing or our wrong-doing.

The thought is continued in verse 22.

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference"
(Romans 3:22)

Here we see the Bible comparing two types of righteousness. There is the righteousness of the law, and there is the righteousness of God which is without the law. It is important for us to recognize that there is a righteousness that does not have anything to do with obedience to

the law. This righteousness is said to be **God's righteousness**. Now the righteousness of the law says, "*the man who does these things shall live in them*" (Galatians 3:12). But what does the righteousness of God say? Verse 22 says it is "*unto all and upon all who simply BELIEVE!*" Notice, one requires DOING. That is the law. The other requires BELIEVING. That is God.

This truth was clearly brought out in the experience of Abraham. We read in Romans 4:3,

"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." (Romans 4:3)

Amazing! Like everybody else, Abraham wanted righteousness. The Bible says he believed God. What did he do? Something happened in his mind, in His attitude towards God and when it happened, immediately God counted him as righteous. Immediately he obtained what people have been seeking so hard for, and he obtained it simply by believing God.

The apostle Paul understood the way of righteousness thoroughly and gave his testimony in Philippians 3:6-9. He says,

"Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 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" (Philippians 3:6-9)

Here he mentioned all his works, his carefulness in obedience to the law and the lineage which would have made him one of the most outstanding followers of the law in Israel. His countrymen would have considered him one of the holiest men among the Jews. He referred to these achievements as the "righteousness which is in the law." But then he said that he counted all this as nothing but filth so that he might be able to obtain the "righteousness which is of God"; and he

finished by showing how it is obtained, that is, "by faith." The point is, there is a righteousness which does not depend on the observance of the law, and this is the only righteousness which is worth having.

Let us consider that since God is perfect, absolutely righteous, the only kind of righteousness which He can accept is perfect righteousness. For Him to accept anything less, would mean that He had compromised and since He is perfect, it cannot be possible for Him to compromise. The only righteousness He can accept, is absolute righteousness.

Since He requires perfect righteousness, then it is clear that only God Himself can produce this righteousness. In actual fact, all who are seeking to become righteous by what they do, are really trying by their efforts to become like God! This kind of attitude can be only described as "crazy." It is crazy for a poor corrupt sinner to try to produce the life of the almighty God, by his efforts. But that is how confused many of us have become.

THE DANGER OF SEEKING IN THE WRONG WAY

So anybody who is seeking righteousness must go to God to get it. The only way we can obtain it, is as a gift from God. The one who seeks it in any other way will wear himself out and achieve nothing. This is what the Jews, as a nation did. Romans 9:30-32 says,

"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone" (Romans 9:30-32)

Now when you consider this, it makes you want to cry. Who could have tried harder than Israel? The Bible says they "followed after righteousness." It is what they were seeking night and day, yet they never obtained it.

But here are the Gentiles. Are they seeking righteousness? Not at all, but they hear the gospel and what do they do? They believe it, and immediately they have found what the Jews, in working so hard, did not find. It was faith and faith alone which obtained the blessing of righteousness. We must learn that all our good intentions will not help us in the search for righteousness if we seek it in the wrong way, and that is what this experience of the Jews teaches us.

IS THE LAW CONTRARY TO GODS' RIGHTEOUSNESS?

What are we saying then? Is the law contrary to the righteousness of God? Is God's righteousness against the law? How can the law be important if it cannot make me righteous? How can it be necessary if I do not need it in order to be righteous?

THE COMMANDMENTS DESCRIBE GOD'S CHARACTER

The Ten Commandments have been said to be a transcript of God's character. Maybe it would be more correct to say that they are an expression of God's character. In other words, the Ten Commandments tell us what God is like and they are an expression of God's will for men. But obviously, if this is what God wants for us, then it must be an expression of what is in His heart. A person of integrity will only make laws which he considers to be just and good. It is evident then that the law can never be contrary to God's righteousness because if it truly is a description of God, a transcript of His character, then it is indeed a transcript, or a description of true righteousness. Therefore Paul tells us in Romans 7:12,

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." (Romans 7:12)

But the commandments are not righteousness **in themselves**. They do not bring or produce righteousness, they only **describe** righteousness. When God came down on mount Sinai and gave the Ten Commandments to Moses, righteousness did not suddenly come into existence,

it was only an expression of something which had always been there. God only described His character and put it into words in the Ten Commandments.

Many years ago, there was a scientist by the name of Isaac Newton. The story goes that one day he was sitting under an apple tree when one of the apples fell on his head. As he picked up the apple and looked at it, a strange question came to his mind. Why did the apple fall down instead of up? Now you may think, "what a crazy question, apples always fall down." But he was a scientist, and that's the way their minds work. And as he thought about this, he recognized that it happens this way every time. So he began to examine the question of why things operate in this way and he came to realize, that there is a force in the earth, that pulls everything towards the ground. He recognized that it happens every time. So he wrote down what he had discovered and he explained the principle of how this force worked. He described what happened, and he called it the "law of gravity." Today most students in school learn about this law of gravity.

A DESCRIPTION IS NOT REALITY

Now let us consider this further: When Newton wrote down his description of the law of gravity, was his description gravity itself? Of course not! It was only a description of gravity! If a person wants to find gravity, he has to go beyond the description. The description explains what gravity is, but you cannot find gravity in the description.

If you can understand this illustration, then you will be able to understand what the law is. You will understand that the Ten Commandments are a description of righteousness. Can you find righteousness in the description? No! If you want righteousness, you must go beyond the description. If you want an orange, where would you go? Would you look in a book or would you go to the garden? You have got to go to the orange tree, you have to go to the source! If a man goes to a book and reads about oranges, expecting to satisfy his hunger in this way, he will be very disappointed.

In actual fact, the reality is that this is the confusion that many Christians have. They go to the law, which is only a description of righ-

teousness and seek to find righteousness in the law. But if you want righteousness, you must go to the "righteousness tree" and there is only one such place in the entire universe.

Let us consider another illustration. I have a photograph of my wife. If you look at this photo, you can see what kind of hair she has, you can tell something about the way she smiles, you can see the colour of her skin and you may obtain a lot of information about her just by looking at this picture. You could perhaps pick her out in a crowd just by the fact that you have looked at this photograph. Suppose, I take this photograph with me everywhere I go and I am always kissing it, and hugging it. Suppose, I take it to bed with me at night, will that satisfy me? Of course not! Not unless I am crazy. This picture is only a description; and it serves as a reminder. But it is not soft, it is not warm, it is flat, it cannot satisfy. To obtain satisfaction, I must find the real thing.

So in the same way, if you are looking for righteousness, you must go beyond the description found in the law, or else, all you will do is frustrate yourself.

GOD ALONE IS RIGHTEOUS

Matthew 19: 16-17 brings out this truth very clearly. It says,

“And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”

(Matthew 19:16-17)

Now verse 17 says that only God is good. This is an absolute truth. It is very important that we believe it. Jesus Himself said it. Since this is so, what are some of the implications we can gather from this fact? Well for one thing, it means that anywhere in this universe that we find somebody who is good, we can know that God is living in that person. Wherever we find anybody good we have found where God's life is. When we understand this, then right away we know that in our

search for righteousness, our focus has to change. The challenge for me is not that I should produce righteousness, for how can I produce the life of God? The challenge is for me to receive the life of God, for God alone is good.

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS A PERSON

So we see that righteousness is a **Person**, and that person is God. But of course righteousness is also "right doing," because God always does what is right. But are WE going to produce the character of God by what we do? Are we going to produce a righteousness equal to God's by our efforts? This is impossible. Only God can be God! Praise His name.

Let us push the thought a little further. We do not know how long Lucifer had been living in heaven, it might have been a million years, it might have been more. But for most of that time, he was good. The Bible says in Ezekiel 28:15 that he was perfect in all his ways, until one day iniquity was found in him. What happened to cause this iniquity to appear in Lucifer? All that happened was that he chose to separate from God. As soon as he did this, instantly he became evil, because the unchangeable fact is, God alone is good. There is deep truth in that simple fact. When we understand this, we know what we need to be afraid of, we know what we need to be looking for, and we know that human works will never put us there.

RIGHTEOUS BY NATURE

Let us consider a question which will help us to have a better understanding of this matter. The question is, why does God do what is good? Why is He always engaged only in doing what is best for the creatures in His universe? Is it because He is obedient to a rule? Is it because He is commanded to behave in this way? It is a bit silly to think that God does not steal because His law says, "*thou shalt not steal*". The fact is, God does not need law to do what is right. He does good because His **nature** is good. It is the way He is and because He

is good, He cannot do what is wrong. The thought of wrong-doing is totally contrary to His nature. So if God is good, and God is living inside of us, what will be the consequence? We also will behave in a way that is good and we will do it because God is living His good life in us.

HOW CAN WE OBTAIN GOD'S VERY LIFE?

Is this idea a practical one? Is it possible for somebody to live in me in such a way that his very nature is manifested in my behaviour? Is it possible for Him to live in such a complete way that I don't even need rules to make me do what is right? This is what the Bible means when it says that we may have God's righteousness which is without the law. We may be made righteous by receiving God's nature, a righteousness which is based upon receiving life itself, rather than the righteousness which comes by what we do in observing the rules and regulations laid down by the law.

A NEW SPIRIT

Let us remember how this happens. The Bible teaches clearly that man is made up of a body and a spirit (*write for our booklet "Human and Divine Spirit"*). Though we have a fallen sinful body, this is not the real problem of humanity. The problem of sin resides in our minds, or in our spirits, and we read in Romans 8:7:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Romans 8:7)

If we are to become righteous, what needs to change is our minds. God needs to find a way to take away the carnal nature of our minds and to give us His own mind, His own spirit of righteousness. On that inward level, it is possible for God's spirit to unite with our spirit, and for us to obtain the same life that God has. This is why observance of the law will not do it. Keeping the commandments will not take away the carnal nature from a person, neither will it give us the new spirit which we need to have. The commandments can only affect the outside, they

can change our behaviour to some extent, but they cannot change the inside, they cannot change the mind.

In order to receive a righteous nature, there is only one way for man. Through faith in God's gift, he is to be born again—thus receiving God's righteousness by receiving the holy spirit which is the very life of God. This is the experience by which the old life is removed and we receive a new life.

Now our spirits, or our minds are the things which need to change, and it is not repairs that we need, but a new mind. So God promises us a NEW mind. He says in Ezekiel 36:26,

"A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." (Ezekiel 36:26)

Again he says in 2 Corinthians 5:17,

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

What God plans to do is to join His spirit with our spirit. It is true that I am born carnal, a slave to sin. But when God's spirit unites with my spirit, whose life do I have? Paul says, "*he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit!*" (1 Corinthians 6:17). Instead of the righteousness found by obeying the law, God Himself becomes my life! Now I do not need the commands of the law to make me do what is right for it is God in Christ who is actually living in me!

LIFE IS PASSED ON ONLY BY BIRTH

The Bible teaches us that God has ordained that life should be passed on in only one way. God created the world in one week and the Bible says that on the sixth day He ended his work. So when did God finish His creation? It was finished six thousand years ago. As far as we know, God has never created life again since that time. The Bible says He ended His work of creation on the sixth day. But although God

created only two people originally, today there are six billion people on the earth. How did all that life come to be here? It came to be here by reproduction. It was passed on by birth. This is an important principle which we must understand.

There is only one way in which life is passed on, and this is by birth—by procreation. This is God's principle which has been established from the beginning. Life is passed on from one to the other. There has never been any other way of receiving life. Men have tried to create life in a test tube, they have tried to improve the one that we have, to renew it and sustain it. But the only way that life has ever been passed on, is by birth. God made one man, and the life which we all share today, is an extension of that single man's life. God never created anybody after He created Adam. So humanity is simply that single life extended and multiplied thousands and millions of times until we are where we are today with six billion people living on the earth. The Bible teaches this truth in Acts 17:26 where it says,

“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation” (Acts 17:26)

NATURE IS DETERMINED AT BIRTH

At this point there is another important fact which we need to recognize. It is the truth that every living thing receives its nature at birth. We can change our characters but can we change our natures? If an animal is born a dog it will always be a dog and it will always behave like a dog. If you are born a human you will always be a human. What about if you are born a sinner? Is this characteristic of being a sinner a natural part of man's nature as well? The Bible tells us that it is. Listen to what it says in Romans 5:19, 12:

“For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19)

Verse 12 says,

"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"
(Romans 5:12)

These verses tell us plainly that the actions of one man, Adam, affected the entire race of humanity and brought sin into the experience of all. This is why David said in Psalm 51:5, *"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."* My nature at birth was that of a sinner. Who was responsible for this? Adam is the person who was responsible! I received my nature from Adam, not just my human nature, but my sinful nature. The fact is that once you are born with a certain nature, there is only one way it can change. You must be born again. As we have already seen, the only way you can receive nature is by birth, or by creation! If a person is to have a new nature, it must be by birth.

THE POWER OF NATURAL LAW

The law of nature, or natural law, is the most powerful law there is in all creation. The laws of nature are the foundation principles established by God from the very beginning. These laws are controlled by permanent principles of science established by God, which impact even on the spiritual world. Let us look at an example:

There is a law in nature which says you must always fall down. It is called, "the law of gravity." If I made a rule that the next time you fall you must fall up instead of down, or else I will give you a beating, what will you say? You will say, "get out the strap." You know that you are going to get beating after beating because it is impossible for you to fall up. Nature demands that you fall down and you cannot defy natural law. **A legal law cannot overcome a natural law.** The legal rule which says that you must fall up, cannot overcome the natural one which says that you must fall down.

However, there is another law called the law of aerodynamics and by means of this law, people fly everyday. They defy the law of gravity because they apply another natural law. Now the commandment that

you must fall upwards, will never make a person fly. All it will do is make you frustrated because you cannot do it. But if you apply another natural law, the law of aerodynamics, then this natural law will enable you to overrule the first natural law of gravity. Natural law is always greater than legal law.

Let us read one final passage which describes God's plan to use natural law to set us free from the natural law of sin. In Romans chapter 7, Paul speaks of the experience of a man who is without Christ but convicted of his need to obtain righteousness. He says,

"I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." (Romans 7:21)

He says there is a law working in him. He finds a law at work in his body. What kind of law is he speaking of when he says, "I find a law," is it a legal law or is it a law of nature? It is a law of nature of course. Paul says there is something at work in me. Now if it is a rule in my nature, I cannot fight it. The way this law works is like this: when I try to do good I find myself doing the bad thing. In Romans 8:2 Paul refers to this law as the law of "sin and death." He continues,

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Romans 7:22)

Which law is this which he delights in, inwardly? This is the Ten Commandments. In his mind he can see that it is good and he desires to do it. Now are these commandments natural law or a legal law? It is a legal law, and again I say, a legal law cannot overthrow a natural law. So of course Paul cannot keep the legal law which is telling him to do what is right, because the natural law of sin is working in him and he describes how helpless he is, even though the law of God (the commandments) demands obedience. He continues,

"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 which is in my members." (Romans 7:23)

So this natural law of sin is stronger than he is, and as long as he is responding to the Ten Commandments, he cannot control his actions. But in chapter 8, Paul describes the answer to this problem. Look at what he says in chapter 8:2:

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.” (Romans 8:2)

What kind of law is this, "law of the spirit," which exists in Christ Jesus? Is it natural law or legal law? It is not based on legal instructions. It is something which exists naturally in the spirit of Christ and so, it is natural law of course! The spirit of life is the very life of God and of Christ and it is their nature to do what is good. The law of sin in me says, "you cannot do righteousness." The law of the spirit of life in Christ says, "you cannot do sin." It is a higher law. When that law becomes my nature, because Christ's spirit is united with my spirit, it sets me free from the law which controlled me before. So the next verse says,

“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh” (Romans 8:3)

The law of the Ten Commandments, as it is written, consists only of words, but it describes a perfect life and it is perfect in what it requires and describes. But when the law told me, a sinner that I needed to obey it, a perfect law was telling a carnal man that he was to do good. This was alright for the law, but not for helpless me. I was carnal. I didn't need instructions, which is all that the law can give, what I needed was help. So God sent His Son who is perfect righteousness—Who is Himself living righteousness; and Christ unites that righteous life with my life, so the life I now live in the flesh is the life of the Son of God. Now I live all that the legal law demanded. The commandments can find no fault in me anymore because it is Christ who lives in me, in PERFECT harmony with those commandments.

This is God's way of righteousness.

Now we understand why we must always look **only** to Christ in our search for righteousness, and why any other method is a waste of time. It is only His righteous life which can make us righteous. Only this can enable us to live as God wants us to live, in harmony with the commandments.

