

NICK GUY & THE CHRISTMAS CAROL AFFAIR

NICK GUY, VOLUME 23

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THEME: When the Apostle Paul wrote, in Romans 3:10, “None is righteous, no not one,” he wasn’t speaking of only really bad people, but all of us. There is not one of us who is righteous. We all stand guilty before God.

PEOPLE LOVE DARKNESS: John 3:19,20 records the words of Jesus at the beginning of His earthly ministry. He said, “The light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.”

These words reveal how strongly unregenerate men resist having the light of God’s Word shine upon their hearts. They actively fight against having their evil works exposed. A deep and intent look at ourselves is something all men fear.

WE ARE WORSE THAN WE THINK WE ARE: All men desire to be justified in their words, thoughts and deeds. We are quite good at coming up with excuses for our failings, and justification for our deliberate law-breaking. In fact all men, even those who are believers, have a tendency to see ourselves as better than we really are. We downplay our vices and emphasize those things we consider our virtues. But in reality, even when we are at our best, we are far from righteous.

WAYS WE SEEK TO JUSTIFY OURSELVES: Ask anyone about problems at his job or in his marriage, and in most cases they will list off the shortcomings and failings of their employer or their spouse, painting themselves as the victim. Very seldom will they say things like: “My job would be better if I were only a more diligent employee,” or “My marriage would be so much better if I could only learn to love my wife as Christ loved the Church.”

We also are quite good at comparing ourselves to others. We can always find someone who is a worse employee than we are, or a worse husband or wife. Of course, we can also always find someone who is a better employee or a better spouse. But either way, other people are not the standard we use to measure righteousness. The standard is God Himself. In fact He has told us: “Be holy, as I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16).

Some will try to shake off conviction by stating: “God just wants us to do the best we can.” That isn’t what God wants, but even if it was, none of us has always done the best we can, so that, even by that lower standard, we find ourselves falling short.

ROMANS 3:10-18: One of the most condemning sections in Scripture is Romans

3:10-18, which reads:

As it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one;
no one understands; no one seeks for God.
All have turned aside; together they have become worthless;
no one does good, not even one."
"Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive."
"The venom of asps is under their lips."
"Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness."
"Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and
misery, and the way of peace they have not known."
"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

In these verses, the Apostle Paul, quoting several Old Testament Scriptures, is not speaking of only those who are really bad people. He is speaking of all men. All of us, in our unregenerate state, are in rebellion against God, neither desiring Him nor fearing Him.

"There is none who does good." But one might say, this can't mean *no* good. Certainly I have done some good in my life. But it does me *no* good. It's almost as if the Holy Spirit anticipated an argument of this sort. "No one does good, *not even one*." "None is righteous, *no, not one*."

With every word, with every deed, with every thought we have fallen short of the righteous standard of God. Even at your best, the purity of your heart has been tainted with a sinful motive, a sinful desire. As it says in Isaiah 64:6 "All of your righteousness is as filthy rags." As it has been said, all of our good deeds are really nothing more than splendid vices.

GOD'S COMMAND TO BE PURE: Some argue that God, knowing we are sinful, fallen creatures does not expect us to be perfect. Yet, as we quoted earlier, in 1 Peter 1:16 we see God's command to be holy as He is holy.

WHO CAN STAND?: This leads us to ask the same question the Psalmist asked in Psalm 130:3 - "If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" The answer is: no one. All men stand guilty before God. All men are deserving of His wrath. All under a sentence of condemnation.

As verse 19 of Romans 1 tells us: "Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God."

Who of us is prepared to answer for every harsh word we have spoken? For every unkind action? For every vile thought? And what of those times where we held back doing, or saying or thinking that which is good? Can you defend every lie, every theft, every slander?

After considering these things, we have to say, as the Apostle Paul did in Romans 7:24 - "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

This is all bad news.

THE WAY TO RIGHTEOUSNESS: So what can be done? How do we become righteous before God? Is such a thing even possible?

Well, here is some more bad news. Romans 3:20 tells us -

"For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin."

We are unable, by our own efforts, to remove the guilt of our sin. There is no sacrifice we can make, no task we can undertake to make ourselves pure and holy. But, as we continue on in Romans 3, the news gets better.

Romans 3:21 -

"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it."

There is a way for us to attain the righteousness of God. And it is not through our own efforts to fulfill the Law's demands, even though the Law and the Prophets of God testify to it.

Romans 3:22,23 -

"The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

The righteousness of God comes through Jesus Christ. Many will say that they believe Jesus to be a great moral teacher and an excellent example of how to live. But if that is all they believe, they are missing the greatest part of who Jesus is and what He came to earth to do.

Romans 3:23-26

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins. It was to show His righteousness at the present time, so that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus."

Justified? Grace? Redemption? What do these words mean, and how do they all work together to redeem men? Through faith in Jesus Christ, men are justified. All of their guilt is gone. The charges brought against them in the court of heaven are dropped.

And this is by God's grace, His unmerited favor, and it is without cost to the sinner. It is Jesus Christ who redeems men. It is He, and He alone, who can rescue men from sin and death.

God put Him forth as a propitiation or appeasement for sin by His blood. When Jesus was nailed to the cross He had the sin of the world imputed to Him. Every malicious and vile action, every degrading and hateful word, every callous deed and wicked slander was, at one moment, focused on Him. Jesus became the incarnation of sin. Jesus, the lamb without blemish—sinless, perfect, and majestic, willingly had all of the ugliness of human sin concentrated upon Him. Jesus lovingly submitted Himself to that pain so that man could be set free from the bondage and the curse of sin.

Galatians 3:13 -

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.”

CONCLUSION - THE GOOD NEWS: We were all wretched, and yet, God has shown us great mercy, He has sent His Son to take the penalty for our sin. He took the curse on our behalf, so that we might be free. He took our sin, and in its place has given us His righteousness.

Jesus Christ is Lord. He is the redeemer of the world!

RESOURCES: