

Romans #12

"By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:30). Paul has shown that because all have sinned there is a need for the gospel (3:9; 1:16). He now turns to his second object; to prove that the need for salvation had not been supplied: certainly not through idolatry, nor (despite Jewish supposition to the contrary) through the law. His declaration *"because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight"* opens the way for him to show the inadequacy of the law to meet the need of the sinner.

In his Galatian letter the apostle gives added thought to the law's inability to save the sinner. He states there as here *"by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified"* (Gal. 2:11). He reminds them that *"as many as are under the law are under a curse for it is written, cursed is everyone who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them"* (Gal. 3:10). While he praises the law when he says, *"If there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law"*; his premise accentuates the law's weakness: it could not make alive (Gal. 3:21). Since sin "kills" and all sin, the law was powerless to provide a remedy to those found guilty of sin (Eph. 2:1f; Rm. 3:23). To Galatians who had obeyed the gospel but who were tempted to attempt to keep the law, Paul said, *"If righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for naught"* (Gal. 2:21).

Thus, while *"righteousness"* (justification) was not of the law and in fact had to be acquired on a different basis; the law and the prophets witnessed that righteousness which was to come. The law bore witness to that coming righteousness both by recording and repeating God's promise to Abraham: *"in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"* (Gen. 13:15; 17:8). Peter showed the nature of this promise, it *"was in turning away everyone of you from your iniquities"* (Acts 3:25f). Contrary to Jewish thought that Abraham's seed was the nation of Israel; Paul showed the reference was to a particular person, the Christ (Gal. 3:16). Furthermore: all the sacrifices required by the law were incapable of removing sin; they pictured a future sacrifice which could (Hb. 10:4; Col. 2:16).

Having laid down his premise that *"by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified"* (thus proving a present, pressing need for the gospel) the apostle now turns to the developing as to how that righteousness was both provided and obtained *"even the righteousness of God through faith"*

in Jesus Christ unto all them that believe..." (Rm. 3:22). He writes, "*being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood*" (Rm. 3:24). That righteousness was through grace; redemption through Christ Jesus, who was the sin offering by offering his own blood to remove the stain of sin.

Jim McDonald