



deified abstract ideas, and when Paul preached Jesus and the resurrection, they thought he was introducing two new gods, Jesus being one and the resurrection the other god. "Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and the Stoics, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection" (Acts 17:18).

The only political nation God ever chose was Israel, the descendants of Abraham. To this people God gave all means of knowing the true God, and yet with all their privileges they were continually departing from the true God to worship idols. It all shows that the human mind has been ruined by Satan. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (II Tim. 2: 24-26). Someone has said that the worst devil is a religious devil.

We speak of heathen religions in contrast with Christianity, but even in professing Christianity there is much false religion. Every vital and saving truth of Christianity has been perverted by somebody, somewhere at sometime.

In dealing with the sad state of Israel, Paul readily acknowledges that they are religious. But they were rejecting Jesus Christ, the very person that gives value to religion. Israel as a nation is rejected of God today because they have rejected God's Son. No individual, no people can be in God's favor who ignore God's Son. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Act 4:12).

Of all people who would be expected to look to Jesus Christ as Saviour it is the Jews, and yet they are the most bitterly opposed to Jesus Christ. Let a Jew become a Christian and his people and even his own family will disown him. The Jews have a Bible that predicted the coming of the Messiah and Jesus came and fit all that was said about the Messiah, but they would not have Him. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). How sad and yet how true!

In Romans 10: 1-4, Paul describes the sad state of Israel and his prayer for their salvation. He acknowledges that they are religious, even zealous for God. They were religious but lost. Their zeal was misdirected. They were ignorant of God's righteousness and were going about to establish their own righteousness. They would not humble themselves as sinners and trust the righteousness God had provided. They were too proud to take salvation as a gift without money and without price. They were trying to earn salvation.

Paul is here practicing what Jesus Christ had preached. Paul was as intensely hated by the Jews as Christ had been. He had left Judaism and the temple worship to become a believer in Christ. The Jews thought of him as a turncoat and renegade and as a disgrace to the nation. Even Christian Jews did not think much of Paul. It is most probable that the group in Corinth that did not like him was the

Jewish party. Paul wanted to be a home missionary and preach to his own people in Jerusalem, but God told him they would not hear him and that he was sending him far hence to the Gentiles.

Paul prayed for his people but he did not compromise the truth as it is in Christ. He was not guilty of the sickly sentimentalism so prevalent today. He did not say, "I see you are very religious; you have a zeal for God. Your religion is not like mine, but one religion is as good as another and I am asking God to bless your efforts in establishing your own righteousness." No, no, he did not talk like that. But here is how he talked, "I love you and am praying for you. I admit you have a zeal for God, but it is not according to knowledge. You are ignorant of God's righteousness and trying to establish your own righteousness. I am praying that God will open your eyes to the truth of how to be saved."

Now let us see what is meant by God's righteousness, or the righteousness of God as it is sometimes referred to.

1. It does not mean the justice of God. The gospel does not save by telling us that God is just and will give the sinner what he deserves. That would not be good news, but bad news.

2. It is not a righteousness imparted but imputed. The righteousness of God is not imparted to the sinner who believes on Christ so that he lives right in the sight of God and never does wrong. It is righteousness imputed, which means that it is credited to the believer's account in heaven. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. 4:8).

3. It is not righteousness demanded but provided. It is righteousness provided by Jesus Christ in His obedience unto death. Righteousness is based upon obedience. The sinner has no righteousness of his own for he has not obeyed the law of God. If he has any righteousness before God someone else will have to provide it--and whoever provides it will have to keep all the law of God and not only that, he will have to pay the penalty for us who have not kept it. That is what Jesus Christ did. He kept the law for us and obtained righteousness for us. He paid the penalty for our failure to keep the law. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13). "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" (II Cor. 5:21).

4. It is righteousness received through faith. "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" (Rom. 3:22). Faith is the receiving grace. We get what Christ had done by faith, which means that we trust Him. If He is the Saviour, then the way to be saved is to trust Him. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10).

Satan is a skilled pharmacist with a big drug store. He knows the desire of the human soul for rest and peace. He knows too that true rest and peace are to be found by trusting Christ--the Christ of the cross. He keeps men blind to the true rest by offering various imitations and substitutes for real rest. In his drug store he has the drug of deceit, the paregoric of pleasure, the morphine of materialism, the spirits of self-righteousness, the pill of procrastination--anything to keep the soul from finding rest in the blood of Christ. Look over these labels again and think of their place in human thought. DECEIT. Oh the people who are deceived by the false ways of salvation. PLEASURE. Think of the multitudes who enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS. Here is a fatal drug with many. Too good to be saved because they think they are too good to be damned. They have no eyes for the cross because they have their eyes on their culture. PROCRASTINATION. Multitudes putting off any serious thought of their need of salvation. They are always going to, but never get around to the only thing worthwhile--the salvation of the soul. And the Word keeps asking, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation."

—By the late C. D. Cole