

WHAT GOD REQUIRES OF US

A Gospel Tract



MONERGISM

**WHAT GOD
REQUIRES
OF US**

A Gospel Tract



MONERGISM

What God Requires of Us

"John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I have need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" But Jesus answering said to him, "Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he permitted Him." Matt 3:14-15

How can we come to know God, the Creator of all that is seen and unseen? How may we approach this holy God so that He would accept us with open arms into His glorious presence? Well, there is only one requirement placed upon us ... only one thing we need to bring to Him, without which we would be lost forever ... This one thing that God requires of us is a life of perfect righteousness. If, at the time of the final judgment, we cannot produce a perfect record of holiness and a righteous life, an unblemished résumé, which has never once broken any Law of God and have deeds that deserve merit, then we will not be received into God's kingdom, ever (Matt 5-7). Is this good news? If you are honest with yourself, it is the worst news imaginable ... so if your initial reaction to this message is to flee from God's presence, then you have well understood the utter impossibility of fulfilling God's requirement from our end. But read on, there is good news.

What is Righteousness, Who Produces it, and Why Do We Need it?

The one thing required, righteousness, simply means perfect conformity to the Law of God, or sinless perfection. Do you have this? We must note that God possesses such righteousness. When referring to God, Psalm 119:142 declares, "Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness." This means that God perfectly conforms

to the demands of His own character, and to break any Law would go against His very nature. All His ways are just and perfect, so He requires and rightly expects all creation to be the same. He demands of us, "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (Lev. 19:2).

God originally created man with an inclination toward righteousness so that he could obey God's commands, but Adam, the federal head and root of mankind, rebelled against God, forsaking the gift of life and his original righteous standing before God. This one act of unrighteousness resulted in the condemnation of all Adam's progeny (Rom 5:12, 18), of whom we are a part. An insurmountable barrier also accompanied our new state of lost righteousness so that we could no longer reach out freely and take of the tree of life (Gen 3:24). Our new condition, the current lost condition of the human race, is one of estrangement from God, slavery, blindness, and hatred of the light. Apart from producing a life of sinless perfection, we are under His holy and righteous condemnation. God's verdict upon us now is, "There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins" (Ecclesiastes 7:20), "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

To top it all off, we are now impotent to recover ourselves from our ruined estate (John 6:44, 65; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; Eph 2:1, 2:5; Rom 3:11), since all our natural inclinations are to rebel against God by attempting to establish our own righteousness. This state of autonomous declaration of independence is one of hostility toward God and a fixed desire bent on going one's own way.

We need righteousness because it is the holy standard by which God will judge us on the appointed day. Each of us will be judged based on how perfectly we kept God's holy Law. If we broke it at any point, if we did not exhibit or produce sinless perfection in this lifetime,

then all we can expect is the righteous fury of a holy and just God. Scripture emphatically states, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Cor. 6:9). God is infinitely just and does not grade on a curve. He will not consider that you were righteous 51% of the time and overlook the rest of your sins. Such a God would not be just. God cannot change His standard even though righteousness is the only means by which He will accept us. If He could overlook even the least transgression, it would render Him less than just. We chronically and woefully fall short of what we "ought" to do. But according to the clear and explicit testimony of Scripture, if you have broken God's Law at any time in your life and you cannot produce perfect righteousness at the time of your death, then God's holiness and Law make you a debtor, and you would be required to be cast into the lake of fire where you will spend eternity as payment for your unrighteousness. Does this sound harsh? Then you should recognize how seriously God takes your sin and unrighteousness. This is not my idea but God's, so any idea of God that falls short of requiring perfection is idolatry and an unscriptural caricature of the true God. God is a God of love but He is also a God of justice. Any understanding that leaves one or the other out is a failure to proclaim the whole counsel of Scripture.

How Can I be Righteous and Meet God's Holy Demands?

If you don't think you have the ability or wherewithal to come up with the righteousness that God demands of you, or if you don't think you can live a life of holy perfection as the Scripture has declared to you, then congratulations, because that means you have understood what I have written up to this point. According to the Scriptures, the intent of divine legislation is to first drive you to despair of any hope from yourself that you can fulfill God's requirement to keep the law perfectly (Rom 3:19, 20). Despair

should be your first response if you have carefully understood God's requirements.

On the other hand, if you think you have kept God's law in perfect righteousness, then you don't need to read on, for you already have all that you need and will not require a means to escape the coming wrath. Jesus Himself said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt 9:13). But also, if you honestly feel you have kept God's Law, this means that you have not understood what God's demands are for you, and you are deceiving yourself. Take the most important command: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength." Has this been your deepest animating motive and principle of all you say and do? I didn't think so. Even if you have spent your whole life promoting virtue, civil righteousness, and have given yourself for charity, goodness, and selflessness, your many good works, even though in accord with God's commands, are not well-pleasing to God when weighed against His ultimate criteria and standard of perfection. The love of God and His law has not been the deepest animating motive and principle of your life, so it does not earn you the right to redemptive blessings from a holy God.

After reading this, if you still think you are holy and have kept God's entire law, then you don't need, or at least are not ready for, the message that follows. But to those who recognize their need and desperate sinfulness before a holy and just God, let me ask you, is there something that can be done so that we can have this righteousness? Fortunately, by God's mercy, there is! The good news is that God has provided a means to attain this righteousness for all who desire to know it. If this describes you, then read on.

The message that follows is the sum and substance of Christianity. As long as you look to yourself for the righteousness that God requires,

you will indeed fail and must face the grim consequences of your worthless choice. But the good news is that this demand for holy perfection can be found in Another: "This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe" (Romans 3:22). "Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:1-4).

The good news is that Jesus Christ has fulfilled the covenant from our side by obeying God's Law perfectly. He alone lived the life of perfect righteousness that we should have lived and died the death on the cross that we should have died (the penalty of sin being death), so the sins of those who believe are charged to His account. Furthermore, for all those who trust in Him, His righteousness is freely accredited to their account. Although we justly deserve God's wrath, Jesus suffered it in our place. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21). Therefore, God calls you to repent of trusting in your good works and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for your righteousness. There is no other name under heaven by which one can meet God's requirements because no one else has ever lived a sinless life like Jesus did.

How Did Jesus Attain Righteousness For His People?

Where Adam failed, Jesus succeeded. Where Adam disobeyed, Jesus obeyed (Rom 5). God required of us perfect obedience to His law, and we all failed. But God looked upon us with mercy and great love and became flesh (John 1:14) to fulfill the covenant from our side (Matt 5:17). Jesus attained righteousness for His people by being the only human being in history to fulfill all the requirements of God's holy Law. He voluntarily placed Himself under the law and became a willing subject to it in all things as a man. Again, God's strict

requirement means He cannot overlook sin without punishing it. To maintain His perfect character, God must carry out justice, but He is also merciful and delights in His people and is unwilling that any should perish. How did Jesus do this? Because "in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Galatians 4:4-5). He made an end of all our sin by bearing the law's heavy yoke for us as our willing Substitute. Our Lord Jesus Christ fully submitted to all the ordinances of the law as a man so that He might fulfill the law for us, bringing its condemnation of us to an honorable end. Being made free from the condemnation of sin in Christ, all believers are now free to delight in God's law for it fully reflects His holy character. Our new disposition, given to us in our new birth, transformed our heart of stone into a heart of flesh that now desires to keep God's law, knowing that it can no longer condemn us. We are now ruled, motivated, and governed by the grace of God in Christ, which makes us take delight in obeying God's law. God's justice is thus fully satisfied in Christ, so that when His people fail, God no longer condemns them but lovingly disciplines them so that they might grow in grace and in the holiness of God. There is no better news than this in the whole world.

Again, God's holy law requires perfect righteousness from all people. It will not bend, for it is absolute. It will not accept self-made humility, a sincere heart, self-generated faith, repentance, or even the most costly sacrifices. If this is the case, how can a fallen, guilty, and depraved sinner meet the law's just demands? How can we escape the coming wrath of God? We can escape because God freely gives to us what He demands from us. In the gospel, God reveals the same righteousness and faith for us that He demands from us. What we needed but could not create, achieve, or fulfill, God grants us freely: the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21) and the faith of Christ.

He reveals, as a gift in Christ Jesus, the faith and righteousness that was once only a demand.

There is only one way to be righteous and acceptable before God: recognize that you do not qualify, falling woefully short of God's holy standards, and then "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." Faith is not something that the sinner contributes toward the price of salvation. Our faith does not satisfy the law's demands, but Christ, the object of our faith, does. It is not faith that saves, but faith in Christ that saves. And to believe in Christ does not depend on man's desires or effort, but on God's mercy (Rom 9:16). It is the gracious gift of God to sinners.

Thus, when sinners, who can never meet the law's demands, believe in Christ, the law's requirements are met on our behalf, and Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. We are thus made fully acceptable in God's sight and adopted into His family as greatly loved children.

Gospel Summary

1. The Ultimate Requirement: Perfect Righteousness Our relationship with God hinges on a singular, non-negotiable requirement: perfect righteousness. This means a life of unblemished holiness, adhering flawlessly to God's Law. Without this, we stand disqualified from entering God's kingdom, as depicted in Matthew 5-7.

2. Humanity's Inherent Failure Every person, as a descendant of Adam, inherits a nature estranged from God and incapable of achieving this righteousness. Our natural state is one of rebellion, blindness, and a tendency to sin, as evidenced in Romans 3:23 and

Ecclesiastes 7:20. We are inherently unable to fulfill God's standards and are therefore subject to His righteous judgment.

3. The Incapacity to Self-Redeem Our efforts to establish our righteousness are futile. We're spiritually impotent, unable to recover from our fallen state on our own, as indicated in John 6:44 and 1 Corinthians 2:14. This recognition should lead us to despair of our ability to meet God's holy demands.

4. Christ's Fulfillment of Righteousness Jesus Christ, however, embodies the solution. He achieved what Adam failed to do, living a life of perfect obedience to God's Law. He took upon Himself the punishment our sins deserved, thereby fulfilling the Law's demands for us. As 2 Corinthians 5:21 states, He became sin for us, that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. Victorious, He rose bodily from the dead, conquering all enemies.

5. Righteousness through Faith in Christ This righteousness is offered to us through faith in Jesus Christ. By acknowledging our inability to attain righteousness and placing our trust in Christ, we are imputed His righteousness. By grace, through faith, not by our works or efforts, we are saved and adopted into God's family, as illustrated in Romans 10:1-4 and Galatians 4:4-5. This is the grace of God: providing for us what He demands of us, freely in Christ.