

Jehovah-Tsidkenu
Psalms 23:3b & Jeremiah 32:26-32, 33:1-9, & 14-16

Psalms 23:3b

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

This morning we are revisiting the 23rd Psalm and will be looking at the second part of verse 3. To understand this part of the verse, we need to understand that sheep tend to be creatures of habit and those habits tend to be very destructive as well. If you leave a sheep to itself or let it go where it wishes, it will go to the same field repeatedly over and over again. It will end up destroying the land it is grazing on, as well as destroying itself in the process. That's why sheep need a good shepherd to lead them down the right (or righteous) path. The shepherd does this for the sheep's sake, but also for his own sake. I'm no expert, but I would imagine when you ask someone in those circles who the best shepherd is, they would first look at how well a flock is taken care of and how their grazing fields are managed before they would tell you who the good shepherds is. This is what King David is referring to when he speaks of God as the one who leads us down the paths of righteousness (the right way) for His name's sake. David is referring to God as Jehovah-Tsidkenu or "The Lord is our righteousness". Like sheep (when left to ourselves) we go back to destructive behaviors (sin) in our own lives over and over again that will lead to our eventual destruction (Romans 6:23). However we have a Good Shepherd who not only leads us to righteousness for our good and His Glory, but we have a God who **IS** our righteousness. Let's take a look at scripture once again to see where God was first called Jehovah-Tsidkenu and what that means for us.

You need righteousness and you have none of your own. - Jeremiah 32:26-31

²⁶ *Then this message came to Jeremiah from the Lord:* ²⁷*"I am the Lord, the God of all the peoples of the world. Is anything too hard for me?"* ²⁸ *Therefore, this is what the Lord says: I will hand this city over to the Babylonians and to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and he will capture it.* ²⁹ *The Babylonians outside the walls will come in and set fire to the city. They will burn down all these houses where the people provoked my anger by burning incense to Baal on the rooftops and by pouring out liquid offerings to other gods.* ³⁰ *Israel and Judah have done nothing but wrong since their earliest days. They have infuriated me with all their evil deeds,"* *says the Lord.* ³¹ *"From the time this city was built until now, it has done nothing but anger me, so I am determined to get rid of it.*

Jeremiah was called the "weeping prophet" because the messages that he was entrusted to bring to the people of Judah were of judgment and sorrow - it broke Jeremiah's heart. The time had come for Judah to be punished for their rebellion against God. The people of Judah had been just like the sheep we spoke of in Psalms 23 - they had kept doing what they wanted and not following the Good Shepherd. Verse 30 in Chapter 32 of Jeremiah sums it up perfectly when God says that Judah along with Israel have done nothing but wrong since their earliest days. God gave them the promised land, saw them through the era of Judges, and was with them throughout all the Kings and Kingdom divisions. Despite all that God had done for them, bringing them out of Egypt they still refused to follow the Good Shepherd down the right path. Instead they insisted on doing things their own way. This is a perfect example of what Isaiah wrote about a few hundred years before in Isaiah 64:6 that our righteousness is like filthy rags. Filthy rags is a great description of what Judah had been doing for years. Well what's the big deal about righteousness? Righteousness means doing the right things and it's only through perfect righteousness that those in Judah could have been made right with God. It's the only

way they could have experienced eternity in a perfect place called heaven that God has prepared. Perfect righteousness was their standard and they failed miserably. This goes for more than just those in Judah, it also goes for us too. God requires us to have perfect righteousness as well. Our righteousness is just like that of the Judeans, all the right things we do (when compared to God's standards) are like filthy rags. Romans 3:23 tells us that we have all sinned and have fallen short of God's standard (that standard is perfect righteousness). That wasn't good news for those in Judah then and it's not good news for us now. It means that judgment is coming for all of us because we have all fallen short of God's standard (Romans 6:23). Our unrighteousness is sometimes hard for us to see because we have a tendency to compare ourselves to others. When we think about our righteousness we can never do that because we will always find someone who is worse than us based on our own standards. We must all compare ourselves to God's glorious standard and understand that we are ALL in bad shape. Everyone is unrighteous in all our ways and thoughts so we must understand that judgment is coming to everyone who is unrighteous.

You can't obtain righteousness yourself. - Jeremiah 33:1-5

¹ While Jeremiah was still confined in the courtyard of the guard, the Lord gave him this second message: ² "This is what the Lord says—the Lord who made the earth, who formed and established it, whose name is the Lord: ³ Ask me and I will tell you remarkable secrets you do not know about things to come. ⁴ For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: You have torn down the houses of this city and even the king's palace to get materials to strengthen the walls against the siege ramps and swords of the enemy. ⁵ You expect to fight the Babylonians, but the men of this city are already as good as dead, for I have determined to destroy them in my terrible anger. I have abandoned them because of all their wickedness.

For most of Jeremiah's ministry, no one would believe him when he spoke. He would bring a message from God and everyone would just ignore it. Now the hoofbeats of the enemy were getting closer and closer and people were starting to take notice - judgment was coming. God had already said He was going to turn them over to the Babylonians. Those in Judah were determined to fix this problem themselves, even though God said it was useless. They started to destroy everything in their own city in an effort to fortify the walls to prevent this invasion. This was all for naught for their unrighteousness had already brought judgment upon them. As God said, they were as good as dead. When thinking about our own unrighteousness, we need to understand that the response those in Judah had to their impending judgment is the same response most of us have when faced with our own unrighteousness. We will try everything to make it better ourselves. Here's the thing - we can't. We can't fix our righteousness problem on our own. We can pray every day, read the Bible, come to church every time the church doors are open, serve, and give everything we have away to those in need, but it doesn't matter what we do. It will not fix the problem of our unrighteousness and the coming judgment. Sure, like we said before, you can compare yourself to others and maybe feel better about where you are in relation to them, but in reality, everything you try on your own is just adding more filthy rags to the pile. The people in Judah were doing everything in their power to fix their problem and prevent the coming judgment. We can look at history and know that judgment came and know for certain that judgment is coming for us as well as our unrighteousness.

Righteousness only comes through Jesus Christ - Jeremiah 33:6-9 & 14-16

⁶ "Nevertheless, the time will come when I will heal Jerusalem's wounds and give it prosperity and true peace. ⁷ I will restore the fortunes of Judah and Israel and rebuild their towns. ⁸ I will

cleanse them of their sins against me and forgive all their sins of rebellion.⁹ Then this city will bring me joy, glory, and honor before all the nations of the earth! The people of the world will see all the good I do for my people, and they will tremble with awe at the peace and prosperity I provide for them.

¹⁴ "The day will come, says the Lord, when I will do for Israel and Judah all the good things I have promised them. ¹⁵ "In those days and at that time I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David's line. He will do what is just and right throughout the land. ¹⁶ In that day Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this will be its name: 'The Lord Is Our Righteousness.'

It was too late for the people of Judah, judgment was coming, but coming with it was a promise. A promise that is not too late for us to accept. It's the promise of salvation - a promise of perfect righteousness that was fulfilled on the cross through Jesus Christ, our Good Shepherd. God speaks of the unrighteousness and coming judgment on Judah. He also begins to reveal Himself in the same way that He revealed Himself in the first three verses in Psalms 23. In verse 6 of Jeremiah 33, God promises to heal (Jehovah-Rapha), He promises to provide (Jehovah-Jireh), and He promises to bring true peace (Jehovah-Shalom). Then He speaks of forgiveness of sin as He reveals Himself as Jehovah-Tsidkenu. In verses 15 & 16 we see a prophecy and promise of the one who is coming to save, not only Judah and Israel but all of the world. He is the one who will be perfectly righteous and everyone will be in awe of what He does. He's cleansing and forgiving their sins. He is restoring people and everyone will be in awe of the Shepherd because of what He is doing for His sheep. Just as King David had spoken years before when He wrote the 23rd Psalm. He is leading them down paths of righteousness for His name's sake. The one promised is Jesus. This restoration is not because Judah was able to work out their own righteousness. It is because Jesus will be their righteousness, Jehovah-Tsidkenu.

Again, we are blessed with the entirety of Scripture. We have much more revealed to us than was revealed to Jeremiah and those he ministered to. We know that Jesus said that we must be perfect like God is perfect (Matthew 5:48). Right before He stated this, He speaks of God's standard that doesn't just concern our actions but our thought life as well. We might not have committed murder, but we have hated someone in our hearts. We might not have committed adultery, but we have had lust in our hearts. We have to be perfect in all these ways - that is the kind of righteousness that God demands. Jesus also said that our righteousness had to be greater than the most righteous people of His day (by worldly standards at least, Matthew 5:20). These are just two statements of Jesus that show us that we are all unrighteous and there is nothing we can do to fix it, but Jesus did. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that for our sake, Jesus became sin even though He knew no sin, so that we might become the righteousness of God (That's Jehovah-Tsidkenu). So how can one come to know God as Jehovah-Tsidkenu? Romans 3:21-22 tells us that

²¹ But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. ²² We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

It's by putting our faith in Jesus that His righteousness is put into our account and it's imputed unto us. When we put our faith in Jesus, His righteousness is given to us. God no longer sees our sins for they are as far as the East is from the West. Instead, He sees the righteousness of

His son, who gave His perfect life for us. This is the only way to be made right with God. It's by putting your faith in Jesus and making Him the Lord of your life. It's the only way we can spend eternity with Him.

Like sheep we all have gone astray (Isaiah 53:6), doing whatever we want, thinking it's the best for us when it is only leading to our destruction (Proverbs 14:12). Judgment is coming (Galatians 6:7), but we have a Good Shepherd who will lead us down paths of righteousness for our good and for His Glory. We just have to put our faith in Him and follow wherever He leads. Where He leads might be different depending on the season, but we can always trust that it is what's best. He is Jehovah-Tsidkenu. He and He alone is our righteousness.