

Yeshua

MISHPACHAH

A NEWSLETTER TO THE FAMILY OF JESUS FROM RESTORATION MINISTRIES

The Hebraic family is not simply an individual or private matter. Rather, it is an institution in which the whole community has a stake. Thus, the Hebrew word "mishpachah," meaning family, not only refers to parents and children, but to the whole extended family worldwide in the body of "Yeshua"— our Jesus.

Dear Friends,

We trust you will be inspired in considering the topic of salvation more as a way of living than a one time confession.

Salvation - A Pilgrimage of Actions

As we carry the message of *Restoration* we are always pondering the type of soil open to receive this word. We now see that true restoration is for the *humble*, for those who have been hurt and still choose to bless rather than be bitter. This is a message for those who earnestly want Jesus above all other desires. To the proud, the greedy, the power-seekers, and to those whose idols are the things of this world (see Eze. 14:1-8), the message of *Restoration* has no meaning.

A few days after our return from Birmingham, our son Mike was suspended from his job at the supermarket. He had been there just under a year, and only a few weeks earlier had received a glowing written recommendation from the outgoing store manager. He was ostensibly released for failing to pay for salad dressing at their salad bar. I initially sensed that there was something more behind his firing. There are several different minorities that worked with Mike at the store. A few had made Mike aware of the

discrimination toward them by the management. Several had expressed a need to be taught English so that they could be more effective on their jobs.

Two months ago Mike began to buy Bibles for the employees in their native languages. He also asked his Mom, who has previously taught conversational English, to teach these employees. Sue was glad to do so, but the store management refused to let her use the store conference room for this, even though they had willingly allowed other groups to use the room. In an effort at consciousness-raising, Mike gave copies of our last newsletter about racism to the management.

An hour before Mike was fired, a Haitian woman asked if he could help her call the union representative regarding an overtime matter. She felt that the representative might have a difficult time understanding her English. This last act of kindness by Mike signed his "death warrant."

The day after Mike's dismissal, an anonymous caller with a foreign accent phoned and asked to talk with me. He confirmed what we had suspected, telling me about the humiliating treatment the minorities have suffered at the hands of management. He told me that some were forced to work overtime without pay. Others had been fired on trumped-up charges. He affirmed

Mike's integrity and his wonderful concern for the minority workers. I cried (actually, I bawled) when he pleaded, "Isn't there anyone who will help us? Isn't there anyone who cares?"

In light of our experience in Birmingham and with our son, I want to share with you about **God's standards of righteousness** for those who would follow Jesus.

The Hebrew word for righteousness is *tzedakah* (pron. zeh-deh-kah'). Gentile Christians often connote righteousness, holiness, and godliness in a pietistic sense, sort of a fuzzy ideal that can never be attained. Many consider themselves righteous in comparison to worldly behaviors or attitudes, and feel "holy" because they don't "sin" like unbelievers do. In essence, they feel righteous by what they *don't* do, thinking that abstinence in and of itself pleases God. God's commands in the Bible, especially the Hebrew Scriptures, seem like His list of 'don't do's.'

Permit me to make an observation. The Hebrew Bible, the *Tanakh*, (pron. tah-nahk') is what is called the Old Testament. The *Torah* is that portion of the *Tanakh* inaccurately called "the law." More accurately, the *Torah* is the "teaching of God" for His people. The *Torah* represents His righteous requirements for those who love Him, and as a result of

that love, want to serve and obey² called them “hypocrites”: their religious practices even nullified the Word of God. The Pharisaic trap exists in many areas of the church today: People who claim to belong to Jesus live with no noticeable life flow of the Holy Spirit.

To most the word “law” implies constraint. For instance, when you see a speed limit sign saying “65”, do you view it *positively*—i.e., as a privilege to travel at a speed all the way up to 65 MPH? Are you grateful that someone has defined the speed limit to reduce your chance of an accident? Or, do you see this as limiting and constraining you from going over 65 MPH? Do you still speed anyway?

Paul warned Jesus’s followers that actions based only on constraint accomplish nothing; they don’t even keep us from giving in to our sin nature: *“Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence”* (Col. 2:23).

The Righteousness of Salvation

“Whoever trusts in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified” (John 7:38,39).

In the above passage our Lord lays the crucial bedrock for all His followers: there is a *required trust* in Him spelled out in the Scriptures, and something spectacular will flow from us as a result of this trust. The only Scriptures that existed when Jesus spoke these words was the Hebrew Bible. What is the Gospel enunciated in the Hebrew Scriptures? The Pharisees certainly didn’t know, for Jesus

The Hebrew Bible taught that one of the ways the Jews would recognize the Messiah was by six righteous deeds which He would perform. When John the Baptist (Mat. 11:1-6) sends his disciples to ask Jesus, *“Are you the one who was to come?”*, Jesus replied, *“The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.”*

One indicator of belonging to God that is mentioned throughout Scripture is performing acts of righteousness that He has prepared. [In our March 1996 newsletter we wrote about how important righteousness was to the Jewish early Church so that their prayers would be answered]. James develops the Bible’s continuity concerning righteousness: *“Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that **his faith and his actions were working together**, and his faith was made **complete** by what he did. And the passage in the Tanakh was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend...As the body without the spirit is dead, so **faith without deeds is dead”*** (vv. 2:21-23,26). In the hearts of the Jews and the followers of Jesus, righteousness was seen in what they *did*, not in what they *refrained* from doing. (There are 613 commands of God in the

Hebrew Scriptures, and over a *thousand* in the New Testament — and many of these are commands to “do”!)

The God Who requires righteousness of His people also teaches what He considers that righteousness to be. In the first part of Isaiah 58, God confronts the people about their offense toward Him through their misunderstanding of His requirements. He begins by revealing the wrong motive behind their fasting, telling them that they *“seem eager”* to know His ways and to get closer to Him. (Many of God’s people today seem eager about the things of God but fail to incorporate them into their lives.) Through Isaiah, God reveals to His people His standards for righteousness:

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter—when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk” (Isaiah 58:6-9).

If you think that the above passage is “Old Testament” and doesn’t apply to the Church today, we want to reemphasize the criteria for the judgment throne as stated by Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46: *“When the*

Son of Man comes in his glory,³ and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another... Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' Then the **righteous** will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (Mat. 25:31-40).

James reaffirms that righteousness is evidenced from our trusting-faith in Jesus when our concern for those who are less fortunate translates into action (see James 2:14-19). Paul displays the priority of righteousness that goes beyond his call as an apostle and evangelist. We Gentiles fail to understand the significance of Paul's act of righteousness when he travels throughout the churches of Asia Minor to specifically collect money for the church of Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:1-15). He alters his calling to do the acts of a *tzaddik* [pron. zah'-dik], a righteous person.

The Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37 was righteous because he went out of his way to help someone even at his own expense. God made sure that this parable immediately followed Jesus's discussion with the *Torah* expert about what he must do to inherit eternal life. The answer: "Love [Hebrew: *ahab*; Greek: *agape*] the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Luke 10:27; see Deut. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18). It is because of love, both in the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible, that we want to know and to obey the righteous requirements of our God. One of His requirements: to do good to those who can never pay you back. We are even told to invite to our homes those who cannot invite us back: "But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the **righteous**" (Luke 14:13,14).

Note: We are *not* saying that our faith plus our works will earn us anything. We are saying that if we have the Gospel "as the Scripture has said", the Holy Spirit will compel us to display God's love through our actions. These are things that will count at the judgment throne as you, a follower of Jesus, appear before Him: "As a pledge, God has given us his Spirit...for we **live by trust**, not by what we see...Therefore, whether at home or away from home, we try our utmost to **please him**; for we must appear before the Messiah's court of judgment where everyone will receive the good or bad consequences of what he did while he

was in the body" (2Cor. 5:5-10). You need to be concerned about what decisions you make now in your life. Isn't it better that each of us asks ourselves now, "Who are those who are blessed by our actions?" Don't wait until the Judge asks the same question. The whole message of *Restoration* is nothing if it does not help prepare you to be welcomed by Jesus and to have your name proclaimed to the hosts of heaven (Rev. 3:5). "Here is how love has been brought to maturity in us: as the Messiah is, so are we in the world. This gives us confidence for the Day of Judgment" (1 Jn 4:17).

When we read about Jesus healing and delivering people, He was performing acts of righteousness that represented His relationship with the Father. [Do people see *your* Father through *your* actions and choices each day?] Have you ever noticed how many of Jesus's acts of kindness incurred the wrath of the religious authorities? When He brought Lazarus back to life, they not only wanted to kill Him but Lazarus as well.

Consider what my son encountered when he involved himself in attempting to remove the racial tension at his workplace. Initially, it may seem to have a negative outcome. But it is important to keep in mind what God's Word tells us: "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness" (Jam. 3:18). We expectantly wait for Mike's actions to produce righteousness. My heart delights in Mike, both in his kindness to the minority employees and in his loving response to the management's actions against him.

Please, while there is still time, examine yourself: Where

can your life be God's loving⁴ instrument of righteousness? In the **power of Jesus** you can **make a difference**. The words of Jesus are still as true today as when He spoke them, "*I tell you the truth, anyone who has trust in me [as the Scripture says] will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father*" (John 14:12). If the *agape* love of Jesus is in you, God has probably placed someone in your life who needs your help. Have you been looking? Have you lovingly scrutinized your workplace, your community, or church to see if there is someone you can encourage or assist in some way? Is there a situation God wants you to take a stand on? Do your children need your support to take a stand in situations they are encountering at school? Indelibly mark on your mind Jesus's words on the judgment day: "What did you, through a trusting faith in Jesus, do for the least of these, your Lord's brothers?"

A comment about the Restoration

After reading *Restoring the Early Church*, some find it difficult to grasp that God would permit His Church to go on for so many centuries altered by the influence of the Greek philosophers and Roman organization.

Consider God's justice: He has hardened in part the hearts of the Jews until the full number of Gentiles trust in Jesus. Has he relegated the Church to live in centuries of delusion because of their conceit toward the Jews?(See Rom.11:25)

Our love,

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz

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