

**Jehovah-Tsidkenu**

<sup>1</sup> *“What sorrow awaits the leaders of my people—the shepherds of my sheep—for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for,” says the Lord.*

<sup>2</sup> *Therefore, this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to these shepherds: “Instead of caring for my flock and leading them to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them. <sup>3</sup> But I will gather together the remnant of my flock from the countries where I have driven them. I will bring them back to their own sheepfold, and they will be fruitful and increase in number. <sup>4</sup> Then I will appoint responsible shepherds who will care for them, and they will never be afraid again. Not a single one will be lost or missing. I, the Lord, have spoken!*

<sup>5</sup> *“For the time is coming,”  
says the Lord,*

*“when I will raise up a righteous descendant  
from King David’s line.*

*He will be a King who rules with wisdom.*

*He will do what is just and right throughout the land.*

<sup>6</sup> *And this will be his name:*

*‘The Lord Is Our Righteousness.’*

*In that day Judah will be saved,*

*and Israel will live in safety. – Jeremiah 23:1-6 NLT*

*YHWH-Tsidkenu – The LORD Our Righteousness.”* The context for this passage is when the prophets of God warned the nation of Judah to repent and return to the Lord. They had long ago abandoned their reverence for and allegiance to Yahweh, choosing instead to worship the false gods of the surrounding nations. Their apostasy and spiritual adultery were insatiable and despite the warnings of men like Jeremiah, they refused to repent. Even then Jeremiah received his commission to serve as God’s mouthpiece, he was told that his efforts would prove unsuccessful because the people would not change their way. The coming judgment was inevitable and inescapable.

*“Listen! I am calling the armies of the kingdoms of the north to come to Jerusalem. I, the Lord, have spoken!*

*“They will set their thrones  
at the gates of the city.*

*They will attack its walls  
and all the other towns of Judah.*

*I will pronounce judgment  
on my people for all their evil—*

*for deserting me and burning incense to other gods.*

*Yes, they worship idols made with their own hands!” – Jeremiah 1:15-16 NLT*

God was going to punish the southern kingdom of Judah for its unrighteousness. He had set them as His treasured possession but they had failed to live up to His holy standards. Not only were they unable to keep their covenant commitments to Him, but they had also broken His commandments and failed to worship Him alone.

While they claimed to be faithful to Yahweh, their behavior did not mirror their expressed beliefs. God put a high priority on righteous living, providing them with a non-negotiable code of conduct meant to regulate every area of their lives. His standard of conduct was high.

*“You must be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.” – Leviticus 19:2 NLT*

They were forbidden from deceiving, defrauding, or robbing their neighbor. They were to treat the disadvantaged and disabled with respect and honor. Gossip was forbidden, as well as unjust business transactions. Workers were to be paid fairly and treated with dignity. In every area of life, they were to express love for one another and live according to God’s righteous standards.

*“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but **in righteousness** shall you judge your neighbor.” – Leviticus 19:15 ESV*

All these commands are found in Leviticus 19, and after each one, God included the statement, “I am the LORD your God” (Leviticus 19:4 ESV). He repeatedly reminded them that He was Yahweh, the God of Israel. They belonged to Him and He expected them to live in keeping with His will and in gratitude for their unmerited status as His chosen people.

Some understood the magnitude of God’s grace and expressed their appreciation for the privilege of keeping His commands. David referred to Yahweh as “God of my righteousness!” (Psalm 4:1 ESV). David understood that God was the source of his righteousness. His capacity for right living was a gift from Yahweh, not something he self-produced. In yet another psalm, David expressed his desire that God would judge him fairly and justly, according to his righteousness.

*The Lord judges the peoples;  
 judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness  
 and according to the integrity that is in me.  
 Oh, let the evil of the wicked come to an end,  
 and may you establish the righteous—  
 you who test the minds and hearts,  
 O righteous God!  
 My shield is with God,  
 who saves the upright in heart.  
 God is a righteous judge,  
 and a God who feels indignation every day. – Psalm 7:8-11 ESV*

But David was not claiming to be self-righteous and deserving of God's gratitude and reward. He understood that his righteousness was based on God's holy standard and not some man-based criteria for good behavior. The "upright in heart" are not those who produce good works in their own strength, but who faithfully follow the will of a righteous God.

David knew that right behavior, the kind of behavior that would be acceptable to a righteous God, was nothing more than faithful adherence to His will.

*Who may worship in your sanctuary, Lord?  
 Who may enter your presence on your holy hill?  
 Those who lead blameless lives and do what is right,  
 speaking the truth from sincere hearts.  
 Those who refuse to gossip  
 or harm their neighbors  
 or speak evil of their friends.  
 Those who despise flagrant sinners,  
 and honor the faithful followers of the Lord,  
 and keep their promises even when it hurts.  
 Those who lend money without charging interest,  
 and who cannot be bribed to lie about the innocent.  
 Such people will stand firm forever. – Psalm 15:1-5 NLT*

But the people of Judah had not kept God's commands. They had violated His will by ignoring His rules for right living. From top to bottom, the nation of Judah was rife with rebellious people who refused to live according to God's righteous standards. Even Judah's kings and priests were complicit in the nation's spiritual failure and God would hold them accountable.

*"What sorrow awaits the leaders of my people—the shepherds of my sheep—for they have destroyed and scattered the very ones they were expected to care for..." – Jeremiah 23:1 NLT*

He goes on to level his accusations against these leaders and warn them of their fate.

*"Instead of caring for my flock and leading them to safety, you have deserted them and driven them to destruction. Now I will pour out judgment on you for the evil you have done to them." – Jeremiah 23:2 NLT*

They knew the rules. They understood what God expected of them as the shepherds of His flock, but they had chosen to use their God-given authority to fleece the flock of God for personal gain. They did not rule in righteousness. They did not lead and love well. Their conduct did not comport with God's call on their lives and the LORD Our Righteousness was not pleased. Judgment would come. The unrighteous would suffer for their sins. The Babylonians would invade Judah, besiege the capital city of Jerusalem, and bring the entire nation to its knees. The righteous God would pour out His wrath on His unrighteous people. Their city would be

destroyed, and their leaders would be killed or taken captive. The Temple would be reduced to rubble and the inhabitants of Judah would be exiled to the land of Babylon for 70 years. But their righteous God was far from done. Despite their disobedience and unfaithfulness, He would do the right thing. He would keep His covenant commitment to His covenant-breaking people. After seven decades of captivity in Babylon, a ragtag remnant would return to the land of Judah. But their homecoming would be anything but joyful and their future would be filled with hard work and difficulties. But their righteous God would care for them because He was not yet done fulfilling His righteous will for them.

Through His prophet Jeremiah, God promises to restore the fortunes of Judah.

*“I will appoint responsible shepherds who will care for them, and they will never be afraid again.” – Jeremiah 23:4 NLT*

This promise has yet to be fulfilled. But it will be. God goes on to state, “For the time is coming when I will raise up a righteous descendant from King David’s line. He will be a King who rules with wisdom. He will do what is just and right throughout the land” (Jeremiah 23:5 NLT). This king will be called, “The LORD Is Our Righteousness”

YHWH-Tsidkenu will be like no other king Israel has ever had. He will be the Shepherd-King who rules in righteousness, restoring the fortunes of God’s people and enabling them to live in obedience to His commands. Jeremiah goes on to describe this future King of Israel.

<sup>14</sup> *“The day will come, says the Lord, when I will do for Israel and Judah all the good things I have promised them.*

<sup>15</sup> *“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.*

<sup>16</sup> *In that day Judah will be saved,  
and Jerusalem will live in safety.*

*And this will be its name:*

*‘The Lord Is Our Righteousness.’” – Jeremiah 33:14-16 NLT*

This prophetic promise points to the coming of Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the world. Jesus came to make righteousness available to all who would believe. As the apostle Paul states, “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe” (Romans 3:21-22 ESV).

Righteousness is impossible without God’s help. David knew that and so did the apostle Paul. Even with the righteous law available to them, the people of Israel and Judah could not live up to its demanding standards. But the law was never intended to be a litmus test for righteousness; it was designed to expose sin.

*For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are. – Romans 3:20 NLT*

The law reveals man's need for a Savior. It exposes man's lack of righteousness and his incapacity to maintain a right standing with God. That was the whole purpose behind the sacrificial system. Even with the law to guide them, the people of God would end up sinning and damage their relationship with the LORD Our Righteousness. Their sin would have to be atoned for and "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22 ESV).

But Jesus came to make righteousness available by offering Himself as the once-for-all-time sacrifice for mankind's sins. He sacrificed His sinless life on behalf of sinful men so that they could be restored to a right standing with God. Paul boldly declares that the Gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith'" (Romans 1:16-17 ESV).

The Israelites were given the impossible task of living up to God's righteous standard by attempting to keep His law. But God never expected them to pull it off. That's why He gave them the sacrificial system. Yet, as the author of Hebrews makes clear, "it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4 NLT).

The law was "a shadow of the good things to come" and could never "make perfect those who draw near" (Hebrews 10:1 NLT). It pointed to the better sacrifice to come: The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:9 ESV). It was always God's will for Jesus to become the sole source of salvation for the sins of mankind.

*"For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time." – Hebrews 10:10 NLT*

Jesus was destined to be the LORD Our Righteousness. As the sinless Son of God, He took on human flesh, lived a sinless life, and became the perfect sacrifice that could satisfy the just demands of a holy God, because the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). But because He came, lived, died, and rose again, the righteousness of God is available to all who believe. The apostle Paul succinctly summarizes the gracious gift of righteousness that Jesus made possible to all who believe.

*I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. – Philippians 3:9 NLT*

Jesus is the LORD our Righteousness.

