

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Ezekiel: Effective Ministry To The Spiritually Rebellious
Part XIV: Our Uselessness Without God's Righteousness
(Ezekiel 15:1-8)

I. Introduction

- A. It is easy for us believers to place a high value on human intellect or a special talent to perform a certain work or even to serve God in some great enterprise or ministry.
- B. However, God views us in a different way, noting that without righteousness, we are useless to Him, and Ezekiel 15:1-8 provides a striking illustration and lesson on this issue for our insight and edification:

II. Our Uselessness Without God's Righteousness, Ezekiel 15:1-8.

- A. God presented Ezekiel with an illustration of the wood of a wild grapevine in a forest of trees, Ezekiel 15:1-5:
 - 1. God asked Ezekiel how the wood of a vine is of more value than the wood of any other tree, Ezek. 15:1-2.
 - 2. The answer is obvious: grapevine branches are uneven, tangled, rubbery and twisted in texture, good only for bearing fruit if the fruit is good grapes, Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 1255.
 - 3. God then asked Ezekiel if wood is taken from the vine to make anything of use for man, to which question Ezekiel knew the answer was that the wood could not be made into anything useful, Ezekiel 15:3a; Ibid.
 - 4. The Lord then asked him if one could make a small peg from a short section of the vine, a peg on which one could hang a vessel, to which Ezekiel knew the answer was that the wood of the vine was useless even for making a small peg upon which to hang things due to its physical properties, Ezekiel 15:3b; Ibid.
 - 5. God then claimed that the vine's wood was good only for use as fuel in a fire, Ezekiel 15:4a.
 - 6. The Lord then observed that if the wood were to be partially burned in the fire, consumed on both ends of the branch, with the middle being charred, it could still not be useful for anything especially since it had been useless before it had been burned in the fire, Ezekiel 15:4b-5.
- B. The Lord then applied this illustration to the wicked people of Jerusalem, Ezekiel 15:6-8:
 - 1. God asserted that like the wild grapevine of the forest that He had given man for use as firewood, He had given up the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem for punishment in God's fire of judgment for sin, Ez. 15:6.
 - 2. The Lord would set His face against the city, meaning, He would surely punish her, Ezekiel 15:7a.
 - 3. Some of the city's inhabitants had surrendered to Babylon back in 597 B. C., and though they had avoided total destruction as a city, God would bring the Babylonians back again to Jerusalem to finish their original task, much like a vine branch that had come out of the fire somewhat charred only to be put back into the fire to be completely consumed, Ezekiel 15:7b,c; Ibid., p. 1225.
 - 4. The people of Jerusalem would then know that God was the Lord when this final destruction occurred (Ezekiel 15:7c), and God would make the land of Judah desolate in punishment for the people's faithless involvement with false idols in place of worshiping the Lord, Ezekiel 15:8.

Lesson: *Like the wood of a wild grapevine is of no practical value but to be used as fuel in a fire, so the sinful people of Jerusalem were of no practical value to God but to receive His punishment for sin. Like the branch of a wild vine that is exposed to partial burning is no more valuable than it was before it was burned, so Jerusalem's people who had already experienced a partial deportation to Babylon in divine judgment were no more repentant than before, so they would certainly face God's final destruction at the hand of the Babylonians.*

Application: *(1) If we know we have sinned, may we confess that sin to God for His forgiveness and turn from such sin (1 John 1:9), for apart from repentance and righteousness, we are useless to the Lord. (2) Since personal righteousness is so necessary for one to enjoy God's blessing, may we resist rationalizing that we can "barter" God into not holding us accountable for sin if we try to impress Him with certain works: harboring sin makes us utterly useless to the Lord, so the only way to be restored to a place of blessing is to address our issue of sin and have it removed in God's grace. (3) Since 1 John 3:4 defines sin as lawlessness, that is, as the violation of God's Law or God's Word, if we try to please God in some realm of life but our method or means violates Scripture, we MUST correct the errant means or method and confess to God our sin in having used the wrong means or method or know that our best efforts to please God are going to be unacceptable! (2 Timothy 2:5) (4) If righteousness is God's top priority for us, we best FOLLOW the Lord's leading in our lives to become occupied with living and serving Him the way HE desires. Resorting to our own ideas of pleasing God cannot possibly please Him, for doing our own thing leaves us as useless to the Lord as the wood of a wild grapevine.*