



Light from the Word

Righteousness by Faith

Theme verse: *“The righteousness of God... is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.”* (Rom. 3:21-22).

One comes to God in faith. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Heb. 11:6). This faith in the redemptive gift of Jesus Christ on the cross is also manifested (made known) as we bring forth fruits of repentance such as humility, contrition, confession of faith and sin, and a forsaking of sin. These works, often referred to as spiritual fruit in the Bible, give evidence to our faith (James 2:17-26). Through faith in the propitiating sacrifice of Jesus, God deems us right (justified) in His eyes and we receive His imputed righteousness.

God imputes (credits to our account) His righteousness unto the believer. *“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed (had faith in, reliance upon, and adherence to) God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God”* (James 2:23). For us to share the same blessing of righteousness based solely upon our belief in Him might seem somewhat incongruous to us. Indeed, grace has often been referred to as “amazing!”

The essence of the gospel is that a lost sinner who repents and believes in the power of the shed blood of Christ is saved for eternity. Paul repeatedly preached, “that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). Truly, we are amazed at the profound simplicity of the promise, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9-10).

As we study the Scriptural teachings regarding righteousness by faith, per the definition of faith noted above, we see that we are called to walk in faith and love, and by His grace we earnestly seek to keep His commandments (1 John 5:3). Indeed the soul who has grasped the glorious gift of salvation—and its incredible cost on Calvary’s cross—must truly desire to give his whole life to Christ, to love Him with heart, soul, mind, and strength (Luke 10:27). To do this is to *“yield (ourselves) unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and (our) members as instruments of righteousness unto God”* (Rom. 6:13).

We see that the righteousness which is by faith is not a matter of our works but rather the exact opposite. The fruit of a Christian life is a *result* of the faith that one has in his heart towards God. Just as Abraham believed God—long before the law was given, or even before he was circumcised as evidence of his belief—so our faith precedes the converting of the heart which results in fruit as evidence of faith (Rom. 4:1-8, Eph. 2:8-10, Gal. 3:6-18, James 2:17-26).

As was addressed in the April issue, we know that the righteousness of man (self-righteousness) is condemned in Scripture. The children of Israel had *“a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth (Rom. 10:2-4).* We must avoid the deception of self-righteousness, and rather follow the pattern of God’s Word which describes various characteristics of a righteous person: such as walking in faith and the love of God (Gal. 2:16; John 3:23; Matt. 22:34-40), being an overcomer of sin (1 Cor 6:12-14), being a bearer of spiritual fruit, (Eph. 5:9; Gal. 5:22-23); and having the breastplate of righteousness as an essential part of the armor of God, (Eph. 6:14).

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As with faith, fear also serves as a motivation to obedience and righteousness. However, our fear of God should be of the type that causes us to “*serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear*” (Heb. 12:28). The Apostle John put it simply, “*There is no fear in love*” (1 John 4:18). A healthy fear is born out of a genuine love and reverence for God. It leads us to abhor anything that offends or displeases Him (Prov. 8:13), causing us to strive for consecrated obedience to Him.

Just as there is a balance between fear and faith, there exists a proper understanding

of the relationship between the truth of God and His mercy. We know that a holy and righteous God in the person of His Son will determine our eternal destiny based upon the absolute truthfulness of His Word. “*Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead*” (Acts 17:31). “*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*” (John 5:28-29). We know also that blood is the only remission for all sin (Heb.

9:22). Because of Christ’s perfect sacrifice upon the cross, God is able to remain righteous and still extend His grace, mercy and peace towards fallen and sinful mankind to those who believe.

The Psalmist of old eloquently expressed the promise of our hope: “*Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven. Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps*” (Psalm 85:10-13).

“And if one prevails against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

Ecclesiastes 4:12