

A RIGHTEOUS WORK

Scripture Reading: Romans 9:25-28

If chapter eight of Romans says anything, it says that nothing can thwart the purpose of God. Nothing can separate us from what God has given us in Christ by the riches of His grace. As it says, "...if God be for us, who can be against us?" (verse 31) "What shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (verse 35) The answer is "no one" and "nothing."

But, chapter nine enters and says, speaking of love, what about the nation of Israel? If all this about God's faithfulness and power is so true, and God's Word is so sure, then what happened to the nation of Israel? I think that we can see that God's righteousness or His right-ness is at stake here. What went wrong with God's great intentions for Israel? The Holy Spirit is quick to defend the integrity of God. "Not as though the Word of God has taken none effect..." (verse 6) Whatever might appear to be the case, God's Word has not failed. He has not failed Israel. "They are not all Israel [the true believers of God's Word] who are of Israel [Jacob]." (verse 6)

What happened to Israel is in perfect accordance with God's purpose. He concluded the nation in unbelief along with the Gentiles. He made a difference between Israel and the nations to show that there is no difference! Then, and only then, was He ready to reveal His secret purpose through Paul—the dispensation of grace. When Israel stoned Stephen, they proved for the third and final time that they were rejectors of God. "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" Now, His grace shines forth for *all*; and after this present dispensation of grace is over, Israel shall be saved. God will finish His prophetic course in righteousness; He will fulfill His Word, by the riches of His grace!

Donald A. Webb

Notes:

CHRIST— THE BELIEVER'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 1:30

Isaiah spoke a great truth when he declared that "all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (64:6), a truth which the Apostle Paul confirmed again and again (Romans 3:10, 23; I Corinthians 6:9; II Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:18, etc). In other words, not only did we *not* have an account in heaven which was overdrawn, but the Banker had declared all sinners to be bankrupt, with no means by which to repay the debt!

Our personal righteousness *without* Christ is so void of intrinsic value that the Scriptures call those who are yet unsaved "poor," "naked," "miserable," "wretched," and "blind" (Revelation 3:17). Not only did we ourselves need someone to pay that awful debt for us, but the same Saviour, Jesus Christ, paid the debt of sin that would have sunk a world to hell. At Calvary, our sins and iniquities were put to His account, but His righteousness is "imputed" to us. This is the clear teaching of Scripture as found in Paul's epistles: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted [imputed] for righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

"For He hath made [Christ] to be sin for us, [He] who knew no sin; THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM" (II Corinthians 5:21).

Since you are required to have *His* righteousness in order to get into heaven, would it not be wise to accept God's invitation of salvation through Christ?! "BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED" (Acts 16:31).

"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us *wisdom*, and *righteousness*, and *sanctification*, and *redemption*" (I Corinthians 1:30).

Russell S. Miller

THE ARMOUR OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Scripture Reading: II Corinthians 6:7

A popular teaching today has it that once a person becomes a Christian, all his problems – spiritual, financial, health, family, etc – are over; but in II Corinthians 6, Paul gives us the real picture of living the normal Christian life.

In verses 4-5, he describes three sets of pressures upon himself. First, the general trends of outward circumstances– “afflictions” (literally meaning “grinding pressures”), “necessities” (needs), and “distresses” (literally meaning “being confined to narrow places”). Then, the sufferings inflicted by those who oppose the gospel– “stripes” (from the whip), “imprisonments” and “tumults” (Gospel meetings often ended in brawls.) Finally, the privations he voluntarily inflicted upon himself– “labors,” “watchings” (sleepless nights in care, prayer, danger and service) and “fastings” (going without food).

Paul knew about all-around pressures and problems in the Christian life, but also how to have “much patience” (verse 4) and the ability to persevere by the “power of God” (verse 7). When problems and pressures seem to be coming from all sides and from every direction, we have “armor of righteousness for the right hand and for the left” (verse 7), the “whole armor of God” (Ephesians 6:10-18). There is no simple formula or short cut to standing in the battle. When the going gets tough, we, like Paul, need to take up God’s armor. It alone makes us “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might...(and) able to stand.”

Dennis Kiszonas

Notes:

RIGHTEOUS–THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5:9

The Christian life is meant to be one of joy, peace and victory. The secret of this victory in our daily walk is two-fold. First, we must recognize the program and instructions God has given for this dispensation in which we are living. This body of truth will be found only in Paul’s epistles, for he alone received God’s revelation concerning this secret age (Romans 16:25 and Ephesians 3:2-3, 9). Once we understand how we are to live in this dispensation of the Grace of God, we must acknowledge the second phase of the victorious Christian life, which is submitting to the direction and empowering of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He indwells us from the moment of our salvation. His ministry in us is to help our infirmities (Romans 8:26) and produce His fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23).

One of the mistakes made by many Christians is that they strive to produce the fruit of the Spirit by their own works. These attitudes and activities are to be natural and automatic in our Christian walk. The fruit of the Spirit is proof of the Christian living by his new nature. It is also important we understand that what is described in Galatians 5:22-23 is ONE FRUIT. (This fruit is like an orange, one fruit with many segments.) Unless at least some of these segments are evident in the life of the Christian, he does not have the “fruit of the Spirit.”

Paul tells us more about this fruit of the Holy Spirit in his letter to the saints at Ephesus. In Ephesians 5:9, Paul tells us “the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and RIGHTEOUSNESS and truth.” The fruit of the Spirit is seen in the righteous walk experienced by the Spirit-led Christian. This righteousness is that IMPARTED righteousness we have because of being IN CHRIST.

Marvin Duncan

Notes:

THE GLORY OF HIS GRACE

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:2-6

In all of Scripture, there is no more significant, vital and awe-inspiring word than "GRACE." The love, mercy and purpose of God are inseparably bound within this incomparable five-letter term. The elect of God are the product of His grace, without which they would have no life, no goal, no hope. As mere mortals, we are powerless to gain God's favor. We are helpless to rise from the ruin of our Adamic heritage. "As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one...For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:10, 23).

What to do! In our natural state, we are totally helpless. The apostle Paul stated it well: "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not....They that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 7:18; 8:8). Where to turn? "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6). Being in this helpless condition, we must obviously rely upon some other power than our own. We who are saved know that God provided our escape apart from any effort of our own. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5).

This is grace at work—God's sovereign grace. "To the praise of *the glory of His grace*, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, *according to the riches of His grace*." "For BY GRACE are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Robert E. Hanna

Notes:

BUT UNDER GRACE

Scripture Reading: Romans 6:12-13

Moses spoke to God's chosen people Israel as the giver of His [God's] law: "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:1, 2).

But Paul spoke to the members of Christ's Body as the revelator of the Gospel of the Grace of God: "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, BUT UNDER GRACE." Does God contradict Himself? Paul explains: "Before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterward be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith has come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:23-26).

To fully understand our position—our standing before God today—we must realize what Christ accomplished at Calvary. He had declared, while yet ministering on earth, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17). For the law to be fulfilled, it was necessary that God be given full satisfaction, and Christ alone could accomplish this. Christ died on the cross of Calvary as the perfect Lamb of God. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4).

REH

Notes:

THE GIFT BY GRACE

Scripture Reading: Romans 5:15

"The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord...Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable [inexpressible, priceless] gift" (Romans 6:23; II Corinthians 9:15). From the beginning, man has sought to earn his release from the bondage of the inherent state of sin into which he is born because of the fall of Adam when he disobeyed God in the garden of Eden. Hence the cry of King David: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10).

What to do! If we are unacceptable in God's sight even without ever having turned from or against Him — even before we have seen the light of day on our entrance into the world — how can we escape condemnation? Job queried, "How should man be just with God? If he will contend [dispute] with Him, he cannot answer Him one [question] in a thousand. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength who hath [ever] hardened himself against Him and hath prospered?" Even today men continue to puzzle in like manner.

Even if one arrives at the point of recognizing the need to please God through obedience to His demands, one finds himself confused as to the nature of those demands; but there is great good news! Today, we have at our disposal the completed Word of God—the Holy Bible—in which we discover that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16); and the gift is BY GRACE!

REH

Notes:

THE WORD OF HIS GRACE

Scripture Reading: Acts 14:3

The Gospel of the Grace of God was exclusively committed to the apostle to the Gentiles, Paul (formerly Saul). Saul the enemy of truth became Paul the preacher of truth. His was a difficult task indeed, as he went about among the people of his time who knew only the law, the prophets and the covenants. He braved violent opposition of the masses. In his early ministry, Paul was resented, rejected and persecuted as he brought the glad news of Christ's finished work at Calvary; but his response was not one of revenge or spitefulness. Rather, "...Speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto *the Word of His grace.*"

Our apostle is our example, and as such is consistent in establishing the priorities of the believer. In the face of all his suffering and debasement, as he faithfully expounded God's truths before doubters and disputers, he humbly testified: "None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, TO TESTIFY THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD" (Acts 20:24).

This declaration is affirmation of Paul's faithful service for Jesus Christ. Throughout his entire ministry, he neither faltered nor wavered in his determined purpose. He requested the prayers of the saints "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:19). With what joy Paul must have later affirmed, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:6, 7).

REH

Notes:

SAVED BY GRACE

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:8-10

"For *by grace* are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: *not of works*, lest any man should boast." Many who blindly seek to find favor with God are engaged in a constant search for ways in which they can pay their way into heaven by *doing*. They try one approach after another, looking for some kind of work to perform which will earn their salvation, inquiring hither and yon, asking of this one and that one: "What can I *do* to win eternal life?"

The Philippian jailor asked of Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30, 31). Plainly, there was no instruction as to any work to be performed, no law to be obeyed or ritual to be observed. Simply BELIEVE. Human nature finds this to be incongruous. Surely, one must *work* for any bestowal of benefit or blessing.

God's Word makes it clear that one cannot obtain salvation by works. What, then, are we to do *after* having believed and become a member of the Church which is the Body of Christ? Do we sit on our hands and wallow in the security of our spiritual blessings? By no means! Should we not work? Not only *should* we work if we are truly saved, but we will be untrue to the faith if we do *not* work. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus UNTO GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

"[Christ] gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS" (Titus 2:14). "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

REH

Notes:

JUSTIFIED BY HIS GRACE

Scripture Reading: Romans 3:21-26

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Romans 11:33). Until the saint of God has come to the point of accepting with simple, child-like faith those things relating to God which are unfathomable to the human intellect, he cannot attain the confidence and peace which are available to him. How can one otherwise even imagine that it is possible for a lowly, hapless sinner to be declared righteous simply by believing that it is so! Even more difficult to comprehend is the fact that this has been accomplished by the only purely innocent being who ever lived.

It was all done "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: THAT HE MIGHT BE JUST AND THE JUSTIFIER OF HIM WHICH BELIEVETH IN JESUS" (Romans 3:24b-26). There we have it! What great *good news* is this revealed to us by our own apostle Paul as he had been appointed and instructed to do when God sent Ananias to advise him:

"The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know His will, and see that *Just One*, [Christ] and shouldest hear the voice of His [Christ's] mouth. For thou shalt be His witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts 22:14, 15).

Paul confirms that this very experience came to pass, as he relates it humbly in the third person (II Corinthians 12:1-5).

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