

OAKS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

When modern religion speaks of righteousness, it pretty much means, try your best to rid yourself of your most egregious outward habits and sins and straighten up your messed up life.

It's ok to hang on to the inward ones that nobody sees. Like being arrogant, critical, judgmental or selfish.

Getting rid of the outward ones is mandatory, but the inward ones, not so much.

Paul revealed to the Colossian believers the fallacy of acting in accordance with these teachings of men.

These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence. That's Colossians 2.23

The Pharisees, the religious people in Jesus' day, adopted an all-consuming, life-long, study of God's law and the meticulous outward observance of it.

But they completely missed the eternal love relationship that God intended for His children from the very beginning.

The entire chapter of Matthew 23, is a scathing rebuke for their self-serving religious program.

Jesus said, they do everything to be noticed by men. Verse 5

and

You travel across sea and land to make one convert and then you make him twice the son of hell as yourselves. Verse 15

He also said, you search the scriptures thinking that you would find eternal life, but you refuse to come to Me so that you can have that Life.
John 5.39

The Apostle Paul was a great example of this.

He boasted of himself that as to the righteousness which was by the Law, he was found blameless.

But after his up close and personal meeting with the risen King of Kings and Lord of Lords on the road to Damascus, he declared that he was the worst of sinners and abandoned his religious efforts.

He said, whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection

So, what was Paul actually having faith in?

He explained in his first letter to the Corinthian church.

It is by His doing that you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written: "LET THE ONE WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD." 1 Corinthians 1.30

Paul got the revelation that righteousness was not a religious self-improvement effort to try and create a better version of himself. It was the supernatural work of God on our behalf to restore us back to what we were originally created for - eternal oneness with God.

God put all of mankind in Christ, crucified Him, buried Him, and raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand. So, whatever happened to Christ, also happened to us. You can read Paul's explanation in Romans chapter 6.

And because of this, we could now abandon our own efforts to be righteous and accept Christ as our righteousness because we are in Christ by God's doing.

Christ not only became our righteousness, we were completely re-created in Christ.

Romans 5.17 declares, If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things are passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all *these* things are from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ.

Verse 21 explains how God did it.

He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ.

Paul also shared his revelation with the Roman believers that this was God's plan from the very beginning and that God did everything necessary to make this happen. That's in Romans 8.29

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers *and sisters*; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

In John 17.18, Jesus told His Father, that just as you sent me, I am sending them into the world.

In other words, I am sending them into the world, for the same reason and to accomplish the same purpose that you sent me for.

Let's look at a few scriptures that show what God sent Jesus to accomplish.

Isaiah 61 reads,

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD anointed me to bring good news to the humble;

He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to captives and freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD and the day of vengeance of our God;

To comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the cloak of praise instead of a disheartened spirit.

This scripture also declares why Jesus came to set these broken-hearted captives and prisoners free.

So, they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified.

The Spirit of God anointed Jesus to set these broken-hearted, prisoners of Satan free, so that they could be re-created in Christ, and be filled with His life, and become living testimonies of God's life in this world.

God's plan from the very beginning was to redeem these people back into His family and have them be re-born as His children, His heirs, and joint heirs with Christ of all things.

Now some will say Jim, that's all well and good, but what does that have to do with me?

God put us in Christ and made us new creatures for a very specific purpose.

Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their wrongdoings against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

God has called us, as His children, to sow the seeds of the Gospel of the Kingdom into the hearts of people so that God can re-create them into these oaks of righteousness, these testimonies of God's Kingdom in this Earth.

The last verse in Isaiah 61 tell us why He has done this.

So, the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

God wants every nation and every people group to become members of His family and citizens of his kingdom.

He intends to use us, His children, to accomplish this.

God bless you.

Jim Fuller

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