

Dear Friend,

Php 3:9 And he found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: KJV

Php 3:9 And that I may [actually] be found and known as in Him, not having any [self-achieved] righteousness that can be called my own, based on my obedience to the Law's demands (ritualistic uprightness and supposed right standing with God thus acquired), but possessing that [genuine righteousness] which comes through faith in Christ (the Anointed One), the [truly] right standing with God, which comes from God by [saving] faith. AMPC

Earlier in this chapter Paul described what he had depended on (before coming to Christ) in order that he might stand before God as being righteous:

Php 3:4-7 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: (5) Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; (6) Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. (7) But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. KJV

It seems Saul's strongholds were not those of the flesh, such as adultery, drunkenness, and so forth. His strongholds were of a religious nature and he was determined to live up to the righteous standards of the law. After all, he was born a Jew, circumcised the eighth day, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, according to the law, blameless. Before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, Saul was a man who dedicated his life to keeping the law of Moses perfectly, to the point he persecuted Christians unto death ... thinking it was heresy.

But after his encounter with Jesus, he became aware that all of his best human efforts had made him a murderer of innocent people. His best human efforts, his best human "works," resulted in him becoming an enemy of God, persecuting the very people Christ had come to save.

When his spiritual eyes were opened to the truth, his physical eyes were blinded temporarily. What an epiphany. It was an earthquake to his soul. It shook him to his core and from that day forward he became a man who refused to ever rely on his own human efforts to produce righteousness again.

Saul became known as Paul the apostle. He now understood the offer that was being made to him through Christ. Rather than trying to produce righteousness through his own human effort, he was being offered the righteousness of the one perfect man ... Jesus Christ ... as a free gift instead.

Saul, who had worked so hard his whole life to produce a life of righteousness now saw how far short of perfection his best efforts had been. Rather than continue living that way, he could be saved by receiving the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ as a free gift by grace alone.

Rom 5:17 For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.

I had a short teaching vision of Paul throwing away his garment of "filthy rags" righteousness much like blind Bartimaeus threw away his beggar's garment when Jesus called for him. Bartimaeus knew he would receive his sight from Jesus, and he would never need his beggar's cloak again. Paul now knew he would never need a cloak of self-produced righteousness again, for now he had something infinitely better ... the righteousness of the perfect man ... Jesus Christ.

This is imputed righteousness, like Abraham had when he believed God, but it is also much more. This gift of righteousness does "cover" us like a robe, but it does not leave us as simply covered sinners who cannot stop sinning.

This righteousness includes the gift of being born again with the very nature of Christ. This gift of righteousness by grace empowers us with the "light of life," the "spirit of life in Christ Jesus," that makes us free from the law of sin and death.

Rom 8:1-4 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin

and death. (3) For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: (4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The gift of righteousness by grace has empowered us to live above sin.

Tit 2:11-12 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, (12) Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

Gal 5:24 And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

More and more as I mature in understanding the mysteries of the gospel, I am seeing the truth of this statement:

Joh 6:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

My righteousness is of Him, just as my salvation is of Him. My ability to live above sin is of Him, for it is His nature within me that gives me the strength to overcome the flesh, the world, and the devil.

Lord Jesus, we believe you!

Your fellow servant for Christ,

GARY