Not "My Own Righteousness"

by Wayne Goff

*"And be found in Him, **not having my own righteousness**, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith"* ~ **Philippians 3:9**

Two Ways To Be Justified

One must be found "righteous" before God in order to go to heaven. However, all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, **Romans 3:23**. So how do sinners become *"righteous"* again? How can the guilty be justified?

Paul explains the two ways to be righteous in the quoted text: (1) *"my own righteousness which is from the law;"* and (2) *"the righteousness which is from God by faith."* Paul knew that he could never be righteous on his own, and even went so far as to call himself *"the chief of sinners"* (**1 Tim. 1:15**). But even more than that, he stated in **Romans 3:20** that *"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."* This conclusion followed numerous quotes from the Old Testament pointing out the sinfulness of the entire Jewish nation! Everyone — Jew and Gentile — needs help to be justified and made righteous!

So the second option is the only one available: *"the righteousness which is from God by faith."* *"The faith"* of the gospel provides the option of forgiveness of sins (**Acts 2:38**), redemption by Christ's blood (**Eph. 1:8**), and God's declaration of one being *"righteous"* by being redeemed (**Eph. 1:7**). Paul had already availed himself of this "righteousness" from God by an *obedient* faith, **Acts 9:6, 18; 22:16**. When Ananias found a blind, penitent sinner waiting to be told what he must do, he said: *"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."* Having done that, Paul became *"righteous"* in the eyes of the Lord.

A False Justification

There is a doctrine which claims that the means by which one is **made** *"righteous"* is by the <u>covering over</u> of a sinful man by the perfect life of Christ. This theory proclaims that once one has "claimed" Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, that God <u>places</u> **the perfect life of Christ** over that sinner and he is now *"righteous"* before God because God sees nothing but the perfect life of Jesus! Thus, no matter how sinful one was and still is, it doesn't matter. Christ's life takes care of it all!

One verse used to teach this doctrine is a misuse of **Romans 4:7** where it is claimed that the Bible says *"Blessed are those … whose sins are covered."* And they picture the perfect life of Christ covering the sinner like a blanket. The problem with this argument is that the very verse used to teach it **denies** it! The entire verse reads: *"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered."* The sins that are **covered** are the lawless deeds that are **forgiven**! So there is not an *imagined* righteousness here but a *true* righteousness obtained by having sins forgiven, cleansed, washed away! There is a big difference between the two.

The Righteousness By Faith

Dear reader, do not be **deceived** by the false claims of some on this subject. (1) *"By faith"* is not *"by faith only."* Saul's own conversion proves that he had an obedient faith. Do not be conditioned to see *"only"* in the passages that teach salvation by faith. (2) *"The righteousness of Christ"* is the righteousness provided by Christ through His blood, the *actual* and *real* forgiveness of sins, **Eph. 1:7**. **1 Corinthians 1:30** rightly explains *"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God — and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."* Jesus <u>became</u> for us righteousness, sanctification, and redemption when He died on the cross for the sins of the world and when we access that forgiveness by obedient faith!

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