

The Believer and the Spirit

IX. - Further Evidences of the Indwelling Christ

“What things were gain to me, these things I count as loss on account of Christ; but indeed I count all things to be loss for the sake of the surpassing excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for the sake of whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and reckon them as refuse that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God on the basis of faith . . .” (Philippians 3:7-9).

If our response to the presence of Christ within is merely a causal connection in which we attempt to work on our spirits, because we belong to Christ, we are then functioning in the flesh. We would be no different than the Jews, whose obedience to the Law had to be based upon human willpower without the energy of the indwelling Christ. The Pharisees turned this into the self-righteous pride of faithless religious observance, which Paul saw as purely of the flesh, in which he had no confidence. He came to understand that the righteousness which God sought was only through the indwelling Christ. It is only through His energy that we become partakers of the Divine nature. To the Ephesians Paul speaks of the *“surpassing majesty of His power in us who believe according to the energy of the might of His strength, with which He energized Christ when He raised Him from the dead . . .”* (Ephesians 1:19,20). If our righteousness is not produced by Christ, then we are in no different case than Paul or the Pharisees. Of course the ultimate point is that it is not possible for humans to satisfy God in terms of His requirement.

And what things were gain to me . . . Paul was not talking here about material gain or the sacrifice of earthly ambitions, but rather about his life with Christ. It is commonly assumed that the more religious a person is, the more like Christ they are. That, of course, is contrary to what Paul is talking about here. He was setting aside his religious flesh in order that he might have the righteousness that comes by the energizing presence of Christ. He once believed that perfect obedience to the Law would bring him eternal favor with God. That would have been to him highest gain. After the Spirit of God touched him in his experience on the road to Damascus, he realized that all he had achieved in terms of human righteousness, was not acceptable to God apart from the rebirth of the Spirit, bringing the presence of Christ within and His righteousness. If the observance of religious practices were the evidence of salvation, the Pharisees would have been the prime example. By the same token, Christian practices, however noble, are not the criteria for judging salvation.

That which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God . . . The Greek word for righteousness—δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiousune*) really means “rightness.” It is not a complex word involving “piety” or “holiness,” but rather refers to being on the “right course.” It is from the root word δικαιοω (*dikaioō*) which means “to justify,” in the sense of “lining up.” It is best understood by the printers usage of it, which has to do with lining up type or making the margins of the columns even. Obviously it does not have to do with validating one’s actions. Through Christ one is put on the right path to God. One may have many difficulties along the way, but that does not mean that one is not on the right path. Furthermore this righteousness or “rightness” is accomplished

through the faith of Christ. The Greek phrase uses a possessive genitive. It is not faith in Christ but the faith of Christ in us. We have discussed the word at length in previous writings. (See author's Commentary on Romans.) In brief, it refers more to the flow of Divine energy in us than to any feelings of confidence which, as a product of the human mind are very unreliable. Many people are misled by the idea that when one is saved one must have some kind of feeling about it. Such evidence would be most undependable, since the human psyche goes through much vacillation. The evidence that one has been saved, on the other hand, is based on the fact that one cares about Christ. Such caring does not itself require feelings, but interest. The fact that one wants Christ in one's life is the ultimate evidence of salvation.

Well, what about James' statement—"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much"? (James 5:16). Doesn't that bring feelings into it?

We have dealt with this before, but let me refresh your memory. The King James translation is misleading. It should read—"The petitions of a justified one are energized with much strength." The criterion here is not strong feelings, but justification by Christ. And this, of course, is by the energizing power of Christ and not by human feelings of trust or confidence. Much damage has been done by the teaching that we must be very "special" if we are going to have any kind of success in our praying. The reality is that neither perfection nor piety nor perseverance nor any human religious efforts will prevail to motivate God's response. It is all based on His energy and grace. If Christ has a problem with you He'll let you know. Meanwhile, stay away from the "fishing hole." One of the evidences of our salvation is that we want to pray. If the Spirit of Christ were not working in us, we would certainly not be interested in communicating with Him.

We are they who worship God in the spirit . . . Paul introduces the passage on the nature of our righteousness and our salvation with the declaration that His communication with God was in the spirit and not in the flesh. This, of course, picks up the very words of Jesus to the woman of Samaria—"God is a Spirit, and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth [reality]" (John 4:24). Fleshly forms, however pious, will not bring salvation. So Jesus said to Nicodemus, the inquiring Pharisee—"Indeed I say to you, except one be born again, he is not able to see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Jesus was not talking about future entry into the Kingdom of God as in eternal life, but the spiritual eyes to see beyond the human perception through the realm of the Spirit. So blind was Nicodemus to the reality of God in His Kingdom that he could not grasp the meaning of the new birth. Later, Jesus would say something similar to a simple and profligate woman by the well in Samaria. Apparently she was able to relate to it, because she immediately ran and called her friends and neighbors.

So Paul, once a blind Pharisee himself, now picks up the true meaning of salvation, not by works of righteousness, but the energizing presence of Christ. And this constitutes another evidence of salvation—scales drop from the eyes, and one is able to see the true meaning of spirit and of eternal life. In speaking of the veiled and obscure efforts of the Jewish priesthood to grasp the true meaning of the Mosaic Law, Paul said to the Corinthians, "*We all with unveiled face beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are transformed into*

the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of Christ” (II Corinthians 3:18).

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