

RIGHTEOUSNESS RECEIVED

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” — 2 CORINTHIANS 5:21

‘Righteousness’ is an intimidating word to many of us because it seems way up there somewhere, and we’ll never attain to it, or because it smacks of self-righteousness and we dislike the judgmental connotations.

But the Scriptural meaning of ‘righteousness’ has nothing to do with attaining to anything or judging anyone. Paul defines it in two ways; first, in relation to God as righteousness is His moral character, and secondly, in relationship to people. In Romans 5:17, Paul speaks of those who receive God’s gift of righteousness. Romans 4 talks about Abraham having been credited with righteousness, and in Romans 4:2, “For us, to whom God will credit righteousness.” In other words, righteousness is not something intrinsic to us, but we receive it or are credited with it.

Romans 3:10 conveys our natural standing before God. “There is no one righteous, not even one.” We were born that way and live that way; therefore, any righteousness that belongs to us is something outside of our own abilities and nature. Job asked three times, “Can a mortal be righteous before God?” The marvelous answer is “yes”, but on God’s terms. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” That is the most succinct explanation of the Gospel.

On the cross, Christ became all that we are so that we could become all that He is. Our sin was

imputed to Him and His righteousness imputed to us. To doubt the latter half of that statement is to doubt the effectiveness of the cross of Jesus Christ. Righteousness is never earned, but a gift received through the work of Christ on the cross in order that we may be declared righteous before God. That involves two things; a new status, which is our standing before God, and a new nature, which is our living before God.

It isn't just a changed position we receive before God, but a new life Christ imparts to us by His Spirit, which is intent on producing His character in us. It's a transformation that can only be explained by the fact that God is doing something. God works best in those who know their weaknesses, but those who kid themselves about their true condition, live on the sidelines of fruitfulness, because righteousness flows out of the acknowledged unrighteousness that leaves room for Jesus Christ to work in our lives.

PRAYER: Dear Father, To be declared righteous before You is an amazing gift. Thank You, Lord, for changing places with me so that I am credited with your righteousness in my standing before God.

TO REFLECT UPON: In what areas of my life has the righteousness of Christ changed me the most?