

# God Makes Us Righteous Through Faith Without Regard for Our Works

## Sermon Text: Philippians 3:1-16

*Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. <sup>2</sup> Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. <sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup> though I myself have reasons for such confidence. If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.*

*<sup>7</sup> But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

*<sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. <sup>13</sup> Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us live up to what we have already attained.*

1.) Why is the message of this section one we need be reminded of again and again? (v. 1-9)

2.) When it came to relying on one's works, what did Paul appear to have in his favor? (v. 4-6) What things might we, like Paul, be tempted to rely on? However, what are all these in comparison to the righteousness God gives us by faith in Christ?

3.) Job's friend Zophar once said, "True wisdom has two sides" (11:6). Having made the case that God's gift of righteousness in Christ is everything in verses 1-11, what error does he combat in verses 12-16 going in the opposite direction?

## First Lesson: Genesis 15:1-6

*After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." <sup>2</sup> But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir."*

<sup>4</sup> Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir."<sup>5</sup> He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars—if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be."<sup>6</sup> Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.

1.) Humanly speaking Abram was a man of great (earthly and spiritual) accomplishments. List some of them. Despite all these what did he still lack? What did God teach him through his own insufficiency?

2.) Since the estimated number of stars in the universe is 200 billion trillion ( $2 \times 10^{22}$ ), some might say this promise was hyperbole (an exaggerated way of speaking for emphasis), but perhaps not. In what ways has God's promise to Abraham fulfilled and his simple trust fully confirmed?

**Nehemiah 9:22-23** You gave them kingdoms and nations, allotting to them even the remotest frontiers. ...You made their sons as numerous as the stars in the sky, and you brought them into the land that you told their fathers to enter and possess.

**Galatians 3:6-7** Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham.

**Revelation 7:9** After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb.

### **Gospel: Matthew 13:44-46**

<sup>44</sup> "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. <sup>45</sup> Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. <sup>46</sup> When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it."

1.) What is meant by "the kingdom of heaven (or God)" in Scripture? Which of its shades of meaning is most appropriate in this context?

2.) Let's compare and expound on the like details in these companion parables. What is being said and what isn't being said?

a.) The treasure [was] hidden in a field / A merchant looking for fine pearls

b.) In his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. / He went away and sold everything he had and bought [the pearl].