

*I press on
toward the goal to
win the prize for
which God has
called me
heavenward in Christ
Jesus.*

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philippians ...

Righteousness through Faith

"The wrath of God," said Paul, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Romans 1:18). The great "faith" book, the great "imputed righteousness" book — the book of Romans — is all about those who have been called out of darkness being able to walk in the light. Paul opened the book of Romans talking about the apostles' purpose being "to bring about the *obedience of faith* among the Gentiles," and he closed with God's commands being made known to the "nations, leading to the *obedience of faith*" (Romans 1:5; 16:26).

God's goal, through the gospel, has been to produce a special people who can and who will keep the commandments of God.

- **Not of law** — If a person could keep the law of God, he would be righteous based on his own efforts, as the apostle Paul noted in his epistle to the Romans: "For Moses writes," Paul recalled, "that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness" (Romans 10:5). The problem is that one mistake is a violation of the whole law, and the result is that the individual spiritually dies. Paul, then, in writing to the Philippian brethren, comments that his desire is to be found in Christ, "not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law." The commandments exhibit God's standards of what is righteous, holy, and good, but end up effecting the spiritual death of anyone who violates one of them.
- **Through the faith of Christ** — As contrasted to "the law of Moses," the new covenant is introduced under the heading "the faith of Christ." Paul informs the brethren that he is going to be found in Christ; that finding will not be because of his own righteousness, but because of the righteousness "which is through *the faith of Christ*" (Philippians 3:9 KJV). "With the heart man [has faith]," averred the apostle, "resulting in righteousness" (Romans 10:10). When anyone participates in the faith of Christ, he is granted the righteousness of Christ; he has the same fellowship with the Father as does the Son.
- **Producing righteous behavior** — "Pursue peace with all men," exhorted Hebrew's writer, "and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). There is a sanctification — there is a holiness, there is a righteousness — which has to be pursued on an individual basis. "Be holy yourselves," was the word from the apostle Peter, "in all your behavior" (1 Peter 1:15). Obviously the apostle is not talking about an "imputed holiness," but rather actual holy and righteous behavior. Could this "practicing righteousness" be produced apart from what is supplied by Christ through the Holy Spirit? The answer is demonstrably NO! When the saint of God does his part by renewing his mind and the Holy Spirit does His part in renewing the inner man of the saint, the result is a new creation in Christ Jesus who walks in the footsteps of Christ. This is the ultimate result of the "righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith."

The underlying basis of Catholicism is that the individual is going to be a sinner on earth until he dies. The underlying basis of Protestantism is that the only righteousness a person will ever have is an "imputed righteousness" from Christ, and that his actual performance will always be sinful. The scripture, by contrast, teaches that "the *righteous* requirement of the law might be *fulfilled in us* who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:4 NKJV). The disciple of Christ really can overcome the spiritual obstacles in his path, which is the general thrust of the apostle Paul in Philippians 4:13: "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." "Because as He is," wrote the aged John, "so also are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). Jesus is righteous; let's be righteous!

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JAY WILSON