



*Ministry of the Word*

*Sunday 22<sup>th</sup> May 2016*

by Vincent Gannon

**Scripture:** Philippians 3:8-10

**Topic:** Chapter 3 – Part 7; The Right kind of Righteousness

For most people (none believers in the main) who are serious about getting right and staying right before God, if you like a religious notion, they tend to try and keep the very thing that kills their soul, the Law. It's not that the law is imperfect, on the contrary, it is we who are imperfect and the Law highlight to us that God is absolutely Holy and reflects our sin. From my experience, I have notice that the one trying to keep the commandments, never mind the Levitical law often times has not a clue as to what they are! But not so with Paul. He knew its requirements and regulations, and results see Romans 7:9-25.

Of course the religious person never reads Romans 7, why would they? When it's taken them all their time to do the best they can while believing that God is very pleased with them, very pleased indeed! After a while they can identify with the Pharisee in the Gospel account we find there in Luke 18:10-14. The publican, in their eyes, is the villain in the piece, as is the Prodigal son who just wasted everything, lived close to hell and got heaven.

They would believe that the older son was right to be angry and not go into the feast. Well Paul was along those lines himself and veering off on the road to hell, except for the Divine intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Every single believer both past, present, and as God wills, in the future, is the same. We need to remind ourselves of this fact. You may say that surly once told that would be enough! Well no, the heart of man is deceitful and wicked above all else, and in a short space of time we often come to the conclusion that we have done something that God could not do, we saved ourselves as well as kept ourselves! And if you're not up to my standard you could lose yourself! If this were true that it would all come down to 'look God at what I do'. This is the iceberg that sinks ships. However, when our focus is on the Saviour we think very differently indeed. We not only know what He has done, is doing and will do, we appreciate it. It's all of Him. Now that's the fuel that lifts us up to Heaven. (Philippians 4:8-9).

Right we need to move along the gain column that Paul wants us to know about. The gain we examined last week the **knowledge of Christ**. We examined that last week and really we only began to barely scraped the surface on that. Nevertheless, the truth is that we won't arrive at a full understanding in this life of knowing everything there is to know about the Lord and the wonderful thing is that we will forever be learning about Him, praise God! Remember though, that we fully known to God.

So the next benefit we have is shared in verse 9 which is **righteousness**.

### **Righteousness**

It's important to take your time reading how Paul words this. And the first thing you have to notice is the complete difference between the two. Note if you will these three things, the "who", the "how", and the "when".

*"not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith" (Philippians 3:9b)*

Paul spent a lot of his adult life ineffectually trying to obtain a righteousness of his own derived from keeping the Law. That righteousness - one of self-effort, external morality, religious ritual, and moral works, all produced by the flesh - had been a crushing and unbearable burden (cross reference Matthew 23:4; Luke 11:46; Acts 15:10). Although Paul did his best, he fell short of God's standard (cross reference Romans 3:23), which no-one can meet:

*"Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:19-20; cross reference Acts 13:39; Gal. 2:16; 3:10-13; 5:4; Ephesians 2:8-9).*

He was like the rest of his countrymen who,

*"not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:3).*

In Romans 7:9-13, Paul expands on the awakening in his heart:

*"I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this commandment, which was to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful."*

Once, thoroughly devoted to the law of Judaism, he was living and thinking apart from the law of God. When he faced the true divine law, he saw himself as a sinner dead in sin and headed for eternal death. The law of Judaism gave him life, he thought. The law of God killed him. When he saw himself as utterly sinful, he renounced works of righteousness of his own doing and accepted the free gift of God's righteousness by grace. Let's read together from Isaiah 64:4-8.

*“For since the beginning of the world Men have not heard nor perceived by the ear, Nor has the eye seen any God besides You, Who acts for the one who waits for Him. You meet him who rejoices and does righteousness, Who remembers You in Your ways. You are indeed angry, for we have sinned-- In these ways we continue; And we need to be saved.*

*But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness's are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is no one who calls on Your name, Who stirs himself up to take hold of You; For You have hidden Your face from us, And have consumed us because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, You are our Father; We are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand.”*

How the Cross makes these words so precious to us, without it we would never understand, nor care, yet the grace of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We see how we could not in a million years, come to receive what we have in Christ, apart from the New Covenant.

Paul gladly exchanged the burden of legalistic self-righteousness for the righteousness **which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.** **Faith** is the confident, continuous confession of total dependence on and trust in Jesus Christ for the necessary requirements to enter God's kingdom. It involves more than mere intellectual assent to the truth of the gospel; saving faith includes trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and surrender to His lordship. It is **on the basis of faith** alone that **righteousness comes from God** to repentant sinners.

**Righteousness** is right standing with God and acceptance by Him. The repentant sinners have their sin imputed to Christ and His righteousness imputed to them. This is the heart of the gospel.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21, Paul declared that God

*"made Him [Christ] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."*

Paul gladly shed the threadbare robe of his own righteousness and stretched out his empty hands to receive the glorious royal robe of God's righteousness in Christ. This doctrine is at the core of the gospel.

On the cross, God judged Jesus as if He had personally committed every sin ever committed by every person who ever truly believed. When a sinner embraces Jesus as Lord and trusts only in His sacrifice for sin, God treats that sinner as if he lived Christ's sinless life (cross reference Isaiah 53; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Peter 2:24).

When did Paul receive this blessing? When had he proven his worth and made it clear to the Lord that he was sincere? If that were the case it would not be from the Lord, it would have been earned and not received as a gift the moment he believed. You see, he needed all that the Lord had given him to accomplish what the Lord had allotted to him.

The only way this righteousness is received is by "faith in Christ alone" "solo Christus". Any other way is insulting to the Lord for the single reason that it by passes the atonement of Jesus. It is contra to Scripture and yes most of mankind has gone down the broad road to a lost eternity. Of course people don't want to hear this and if they do hear it they often dismiss it as been too narrow, but hey what is the way that leads to life? God himself tells us that the path is narrow.

Righteousness is also part and parcel of the Armour of God in Ephesians 6. It is referred to as the "Breast Plate of Righteousness" and it is a vital part of our defences against the devil. So when we are go into battle it is not only important to know what we are going in with but it is vital that we are also fully trained with the equipment, we know what it is for, how it can help us in battle, how will it protect us and how we can use it in the most effective way. The righteousness of God which is by faith only, can defend us, instead of going at it alone, which would result in being let badly down and defeated.

In defining exactly what this means we cannot do better than accept the definition of this 'righteousness of God which is by faith' which was always taught by those who are certainly the master-teachers of this particular subject, the Reformers and their noble successors the Puritan divines. It is as if the Church who has forgotten them, and their teachings, leading to vagueness and lack of clarity about this glorious matter. It has suffered such defeats at the hand of the devil and the powers he commands. These master-teachers drew a careful distinction between 'imputed' righteousness

and 'imparted' righteousness. We are living in an age when people say that they don't understand these terms. Several have even done away with the word 'righteousness' in their translations and substituted 'integrity' and 'goodness'! But the correct term is 'righteousness', and we must strive to learn the meaning of it.

But I do not understand what "imputed" means, says the modern Christian. It is the business of preaching and the Church to make these things plain and clear. We should not expect people to know these things when they read the Bible in an isolated way hence the importance of study, fellowship and attending Church so as to be taught. Whoever expected any natural man to understand these profundities and immensities? All of us at our best and highest are but beginners, and learners.

Imputed righteousness is the whole foundation of our standing as Christians. An alternative term is 'Justification by faith'! Modern man does not know what that means either. Of course he doesn't! But that is what he needs to know. He is what he is because he does not know anything about 'Justification by faith'. Men may go on producing fresh translations of the Bible until they are tired of doing so, but the natural man will still not understand it. He has to be taught the meaning, and taught it not merely in words but by 'the demonstration of the Spirit'. It is something that calls for heavenly enlightenment.

Imputed righteousness is what Christ works for the believer, the justification which lets him stand righteous before God. This is 'the righteousness of God'. God ordained this to be the basis for our justification and to also be the ground of acceptance of imparted righteousness.

Justification by faith means 'imputed righteousness' as described by Paul in Philippians 3. This is the righteousness to put on, says Paul. However good the life you live, whatever you are, whatever you have done, when you come to stand in the presence of God you will find that you are a hopeless sinner, utterly condemned. 'Ah', you say, 'but I intend to live a better life, I intend to turn over a new leaf, I intend to start reading my Bible, and praying, and doing good — I intend to make myself a righteous man in the presence of God'. You might as well

stop at once, says the Bible, because you cannot do it. If you give the whole of your life to that work you would be as bad at the end as you are at the beginning. If you forsook the world, and became a monk or a hermit, it would not help you. Why not?

Because God 'seeth the heart' and because God's standards are absolute. God does not demand only a little goodness. God's demand is stated in the words:

***“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 27:37-39)***

This is God's standard. You may be highly moral but that is not what God wants of you. What can a man do? The answer is, he can do nothing. And that is the first thing he has to learn. That is the only way in which he will ever be able to fight the insinuations of the devil. The devil can examine your righteousness also; he has tests and standards, and he can ridicule you showing how useless your righteousness is. When you are commending yourself on your good life he will take up a book and show you a man who has sacrificed everything. You will feel that you have done nothing, that you have only given your spare money as it were, only given that which you could easily afford to give. Here is a man who has given everything, and so the thing you have boasted of, and prided yourself on, becomes refuse in your hands.

Since we can never accomplish God's standard of righteousness on our own, God sent His only Son into this world, in order that He might be able to give us *His* righteousness. He came, the spotless, sinless Son of God, and He rendered a perfect obedience to God's law, obeyed Him in every jot and tittle of the law. He lived a perfectly righteous life. But more than that; He made Himself responsible for our sins, He bore them in His own body and was crucified for them. 'God laid on him the iniquity of us all'. At the Cross, God smote His dear Son as our sin-bearer. In raising Christ again on the resurrection day, God proclaimed to us that Christ's death was more than sufficient to satisfy His righteous demands.

Imputed righteousness is defined in 2 Corinthians 5:21:

***“God has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.”***

In other words, God took our sins and 'imputed' them to His Son, put them on Him, put them to His account. That is the meaning of 'imputation' - that you take something that belongs to one person and you put it to the account of another. A man owes a debt; you take it out of his ledger and you put it into the page of another man's ledger. You have 'imputed' the debt to another. That is what God has done with our sins. He has imputed our sins to His Son, and He has punished them in Him.

But that has not exhausted the meaning of this term. That leaves me, as it were, with my sins taken away; but that is not enough. Before I can stand in the presence of God I must be positively holy, I must be positively righteous. God is righteous, and just and holy. 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all'. To stand in His presence I need to be positively righteous and this is how it happens. As I believe on God's Son and His work for me, He 'imputes' His righteousness, His perfect observance of the law, to me. I have not kept the law; Christ has kept it perfectly and He is righteous before the law. God puts to my account, imputes to me, the righteousness of His Own Son. He clothes me with it.

So, as I stand in the presence of God, God does not see me, He sees the righteousness of His Son covering me, clothing me completely. That is what I now rejoice in, says the Apostle.

***"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win 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 which is of God by faith."*** (Philippians 3: 8-9)

Salvation by 'imputed righteousness', means that Christ's perfect righteousness is put to my account, imputed to me, put upon me by God. And, looking at me, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, God pronounces me to be a just man, a righteous man; and the law cannot touch me. 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus' (Romans 8:1). The law has nothing to say against me because I am covered by this perfect, spotless righteousness of the Son of God Himself, and have on 'the breastplate of righteousness'.

That is part of righteousness, but it is not the whole. There is also what the Puritans called 'imparted' righteousness, and it is equally important for us to lay hold on that also. Imparted righteousness is what Christ works in the believer. It is performed by and in Christ. We receive the benefit by faith hence why Jesus is called 'the Lord our righteousness' (Jeremiah 33.16). The difference between 'imputed' and 'imparted' righteousness is, that if we stop at imputed righteousness, I am left where I was before. I have no righteousness inherent in me at all, although I am clothed and covered by the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the beginning; that is what makes me a Christian; that is the foundation. Yet God does not stop at that, He now begins to work in me the righteousness of His Own Son. He 'imparts' it to me, He makes it a part of me, He puts it into me. This happens of necessity as the result of the rebirth, regeneration, the new life. There is a new seed of life 'implanted' in me.

The seed has been put into me, and that seed grows and develops. This is what is meant by the idea of 'imparting' righteousness. Another term that has sometimes been used states that the righteousness is now 'infused' into me. It is not only put upon me as a cloak and a covering, but also 'infused' into me. It is comparable to a blood transfusion where the blood from one person is put into the circulation and the blood of another. It can be 'transfused' or 'infused', 'injected', 'imparted' — these are all terms which stand for the same operation.

This is how the Apostle expresses the truth to the Philippians:

***“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13)***

We are to 'grow in grace', and in the knowledge of the Lord. These are different ways of expressing 'imparted righteousness'. It is important for us to remember this, and particularly in the context of the matter with which we are dealing. For the devil attacks us in many ways. He not merely attacks us concerning our justification, he also attacks us in the realm of desire and of will, in the realm of feelings.

Considering these things, the righteousness belonging to the piece of the armour of God, 'the shield of faith' is called 'righteousness of the faith' since it is applied by faith to the soul (Romans 4:11). The righteousness which compares to the breast-plate therefore is righteousness of sanctification imparted by Christ into the spirit of a believer.

The breast-plate covers most of your vital organs. It covers most of your digestive system, which helps the good nutrients back into your blood stream and breakdown the un-necessary parts. It covers the liver which filters the blood coming from the digestive tract, before passing it to the rest of the body. The liver detoxifies chemicals and metabolizes drugs as well as making proteins important for blood clotting and other functions. It also covers many other parts of your body but one of the most important organs, it covers the heart. As it covers our vital organs, it protects life. A man may survive a stab wound or loss of a limb, but certainly not such a hazardous wound to a vital organ.

Now when we think of this in a spiritual sense, it makes the importance of the breastplate of righteousness irreplaceable, for not only does it protect us in all our spiritual filtering ensuring growth and keeping us spiritual healthy, it also covers the heart. In the natural life, a healthy heart principally provides the whole body blood and oxygen as it acts like a pump ensuring that healthy blood circulates around the body.

The enemy of your soul comes to tempt you, he comes like a spokesman to persuade by argument; but when God's Spirit comes, he comes as a creator when He converts. The devil draws out and kindles the rubbish he finds raked up in the heart; but the Holy Spirit puts something into the soul which was never there before in the unconverted heart and it's what the scripture calls the 'seed' of God (1 John 3:9). This is what Paul calls 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 4:19, Galatians 6:15, Romans 8:2, Jeremiah 31:33). The Holy Spirit plants the seed in the soil called holiness (Galatians 4:6). Consequently, the 'new creation in Christ is not stillborn but alive! When the Spirit plants this principle of new life into a man's heart he stirs up, and rises to wait upon God, ready to serve Him with all his might, a ready and active soldier of the faith.

A spiritual dagger is sin which hunts for this precious life and it's a weapon that is lethal and its one which the devil uses to stab the conscience. Righteousness and holiness are God's protection to defend the believer's conscience from wounds that sin inflicts.

The breastplate makes the Saint bold therefore enabling his effectiveness on the battlefield guarding any possible trembling heart. The person who wants to be a Christian used of God, must keep on the power of holiness and righteousness in his life and conduct. This person has a work of grace and holiness in his heart but the maintenance of it should not be underrated. They must maintain it by exerting it vigorously daily in his walk. They must ensure that they keep it on and draw it close so that it can't be loosened by negligence or broken by arrogant sin.

In closing, God wants you to be Holy while the enemy of your soul wants you to be unholy. Righteousness empowers us for communication with God as well as it furnishes evidence for heaven (Hebrews 12:14). It provides the Christian with peace as well as having a strong influence on others.

Remember that we are more than conquerors through Christ. What a benefit!

*Amen*