

LIFE CHANGING STORIES FROM THE BIBLE

“RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH”

The only way people in OT times got to heaven and the only way people in NT times and everyone living since and everyone who is going to live gets into heaven is by righteousness by faith. If we haven't got righteousness by faith we will not make it, we will be left out and wander endlessly in misery wondering why we never saw the importance of righteousness by faith.

Listen to what the apostle Paul says about it, “But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything 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 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.” Philippians 3:7-9.

What Paul is saying here is all the things that meant so much to him in the past now mean nothing to him, he has found something better, the wonderful reality of knowing Jesus. His trying to keep the law of God with his own righteousness he could now see had utterly failed, but now, he had a righteousness that had come from God through his faith in Christ.

This righteousness God credits to us even though naturally we are unrighteous. Take the case of Abraham in the OT. We read, “Abram believed the LORD and he credited it to him as righteousness.” Genesis 15:6. Abraham had his faults and failings but God credited him with righteousness because of his faith, because he believed God's word, because he believed God's promise. We will meet Abraham in heaven not because he lived a perfectly righteous life but because he believed God, he put his faith and trust in God. Jesus hadn't come yet but he put his faith in the Saviour who was to come. Just like we can put our faith and trust in the saviour who has come.

It is like this, suppose we owned a business but got ourselves into difficulty by being very foolish with a self glorifying and self gratifying ambition to expand where we ended up owing 10 million dollars which was far beyond what we could pay. We would be declared bankrupt. But suppose a very rich man offered to credit our account with 10 million dollars with only condition being that we believed that he would.

We either gratefully and humbly accept it, acknowledging it was our own fault we were in this financial mess or we through pride of heart reject it and say we will work our way out of it ourselves. Only a perfectly righteous person can get into heaven and God says, “There is no one righteous, not even one.” Romans 3:10.

So the only way we can get to heaven is to be credited with a righteousness we don't naturally have. We are credited when we believe, when we by faith accept God's promise.

Paul spent the first part of his life trying to be righteous by keeping the Law of God and being a very religious Jew. But he discovered that, "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Galatians 3:10.

Then as James says, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it." James 2:10. In other words, if you kept all the commandments of God except one you would still have broken the law of God and would suffer the penalty which is death or eternal separation from God. The truth is we have all broken Gods written law many times in word, thought, and deed. It is not only what we have done but also what we didn't do. We are all hopeless cases, totally bankrupt of righteousness which God requires to get into heaven.

What about those who have never had the written law of God? Never heard of a bible? God says, "They show the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness." Romans 2:15. Everyone has some sense of right and wrong and everyone has a conscience all put there by God, those who have never heard of the Bible, heard God's written law will be judged by their own conscience.

So when do I get this righteousness, the moment I accept Jesus Christ as my saviour. It is by believing in him, trusting in him that a number of things take place instantly.

Forgiveness of sins. Everlasting Life. Holy Spirit comes to live in my heart. To mention three, but also I am at the moment Justified by faith. To be justified means to be counted righteous. It is like an invisible garment is put on me that only God can see. It is Christ's righteousness purchased for me by his suffering and death on the cross. I don't deserve it but it's mine by believing.

It is no good a person turning up at the door of heaven with all their bags of their own righteousness and religion, they will be turned away, but if we turn up clothed in the garment of God and Christ's righteousness we will be welcomed in.

