

Righteousness: Religion or Relationship?

Hope Chapel Honolulu

Colossians 2:16-23

¹⁸ Let no one disqualify you, insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, going on in detail about visions, puffed up without reason by his sensuous mind, ¹⁹ and not holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God. (Colossians 2:18-19, ESV)

Introduction

I was reminded this week in my own private devotions, particularly From Psalm 57:2 of the fact that even while "faith without works is dead" (James 2:14), more than my words and works it is my relationship with God that matters most. "I cry out to God Most High, to God who fulfills his purpose for me" (ESV) wrote King David, and with that expression of gratitude and recognition, David frames this week's theme for me. As we take a slightly different look at righteousness this week, we begin with a "therefore" from last week: ⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving (Co 2:6-7).

1. Christ calls, justifies and glorifies those who trust in Him. (Romans 8:28-30, Colossians 2:16-17)

a) Just as we receive Christ's salvation by grace through faith, so we are to live with Him.

b) A second look at this "circumcision of Christ" (Colossians 2:6-15)

2. Discipline does not qualify us, discipleship makes room for God to work in our lives. (Colossians 2:18-19)

a) Discipleship isn't to save us, discipleship is to give place in our lives for the grace and truth of God.

b) It is intimate relationship with Christ more than knowledge or self-denial which sanctifies us.

3. Christ alone defeated sin and death and shares His victory with those who believe. (Colossians 2:20-23)

a) What does it mean have died to sin and become alive to righteousness? (Romans 6:1-14)

b) Gnosticism and asceticism "are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh" (vv.20-23).

Conclusion

Many of the words of Christ are at the same time well-known and misunderstood. One of the best examples of might be those words found in the John 7:53-8:59 passage: "you shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free." We read these as if we were going to take a final exam, perhaps trying to memorize the words of Christ, or perhaps even try to act out these words of Christ in our own limited wisdom and strength. Yes, memorizing and obeying the words of God in Christ are valuable, but words and works apart from relationship with God through Christ cannot save us. May our words and works greatly express our identity and relationship in Christ.

For our prayerful study, discussion and application:

- 1) Read John 7:53-8:59. How did Christ and the Jews disagree about relationship with God the Father?
- 2) Read and compare Romans 6:1-14 with Colossians 2:1-23. What do they both say about righteousness?
- 3) What is the Word and Spirit of God s showing and telling you?

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