

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God*

IN CHRIST JESUS.

(Philippians 3.13-14 NASB)

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THE PATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS

When the Lord first broke into my life, I soon realized that I had lived a very unrighteous life and that I came from an unrighteous family. Simply, I was not taught righteousness. My family would fall into that group of people that see themselves as good people. In many respects, my parents were good people as the world would define *good*. They loved me and cared for me and made great personal sacrifice so that I could go to college, something that they were not able to do. But when it came to the matter of righteousness, it was not part of my upbringing, for it was okay to do things that were not right. To me, righteousness was doing what was right in my own eyes, which meant that I did what benefited me and me alone. Consequently, righteousness was not something intuitive with me; I had to learn it. This became very apparent after the Lord broke into my life and began that process of change in the inner man. I had to learn by the spirit of God how to walk in righteousness. I must confess that I know there are still vestiges of this self-rightness within me, but it no longer controls me, for by the spirit of God I am able to put self-rightness down quickly. Needless to say, I greatly appreciate the need for righteousness.

Now, in his proverbs, Solomon has much to say about righteousness; however, there is one in particular upon which I enjoy meditating.

But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, that shines brighter and brighter until the full day. (Proverb 4.18 NASB)

Solomon wrote as a father to his son giving instruction on how to live long and successfully. His proverbs often contrast the ways of the wicked with the ways of the righteous or the upright. In this particular proverb, he wrote of the path of the righteous and compared it to the light of dawn, that is, the light of the sun that comes up each morning and begins to shine brighter and brighter until it reaches its zenith of brightness called the *full day*. This is most instructive of the life of a believer, for it speaks of two aspects of righteousness: the imputed righteousness of Christ and the practical walk or practice of righteousness. Both are needed to enter the coming day of Christ.

Righteousness is a major theme that runs through all of Solomon's proverbs. Just consider a few of them. **The wages of the righteous is life** (10.16); **the tongue of the righteous is as choice silver** (10.20); **the lips of the righteous feed many** (10.21); **the righteous has an everlasting foundation** (10.25b); **the hope of the righteous is gladness** (10.28); **the righteous will never be shaken** (10.30); **the mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom** (10.31); **righteousness delivers from death** (11.4b); **he who sows righteousness gets a true reward** (11.18); **he who is steadfast in righteousness will attain to life** (11.19); **the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life** (11.30); **the root of the righteous yields fruit** (12.12b); **the way of righteousness is life** (12.28); **righteousness exalts a nation** (14.34); **He loves one who pursues righteousness** (15.9).

If we want to have life, to not be shaken, to have wisdom, to yield fruit, and to receive reward, we must have righteousness; and we must walk in it. We need both, for Christ's righteousness by itself gives us immortal life, but walking in righteousness gives us entrance into His coming kingdom. The conquerors of Christ are the ones who practice righteousness and will shine in the kingdom of God.

The first and foremost need of all mankind is to be righteous in the sight of God. However, we know that according to Scripture, there is none righteous, not even one (Romans 3.10). But praise God; God's Son has become righteousness for all who believe in Him. He is the Lord our Righteousness!

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.... ” (1 Corinthians 1.30 NASB)

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5.21 NASB)

So that I shall gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my righteousness, the [righteousness] from [the] Law, but the [righteousness] by means of faith in Christ, [which is] the righteousness from God on the basis of faith.... (Philippians 3.8-9 ALT)

‘In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell in safety; and this is the name by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.’ (Jeremiah 33.16 NASB)

This is the beginning of the path of the righteous; it begins with Christ who became to us righteousness. I realize that there is much to be understood about this aspect of righteousness, which refers to justification, being made just in the sight of God. However, I will leave that to others who have spent a great deal of print explaining this. The main point in the above verses is that righteousness comes by means of faith in Christ; the righteousness from God is on the basis of faith.

Once we have righteousness from God, we are to walk in the ways of righteousness. We are not only to be righteous in the sight of God through His Son, but we are to walk in righteousness, and this is the very heart of Solomon's proverb about the path of the righteous. Walking on the path of the righteous will lead to a new day in the oncoming eon. John tells us that if we are born of God and we know that Christ is righteous, then we are to practice righteousness. **Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him** (1 John 2.28-29 NASB). Notice how John has joined the coming of our Lord with practicing righteousness. How do we walk in righteousness? We do it by abiding, making our home in the Lord. If we do, we will not shrink away from Him when we see Him.

Do you realize that the path of the righteous will lead you into the coming kingdom of Christ? Do you realize that the path of the righteous will lead you to the first resurrection of all who will be counted worthy of the age to come, being sons of the resurrection (unless perhaps you are alive and remain when He comes)? The path of the righteous is like the light that first breaks the horizon as the sun comes up in the east. As the sun breaks forth, it becomes brighter and brighter until it shines so brightly that no man can look upon it with the naked eye. It shines until it becomes the full noon-day sun. It is the full day, or, as the King James Version puts it, the perfect day. There is a perfect day coming for all who believe, for the new creation in Christ.

Christ is the Bright and Morning Star and the Sun of Righteousness. He is the Light of the world. He is our Righteousness. He is our every provision to lead us joyously into the perfect day. But what is this day? It is the day of Christ, which is our hope of glory. It is the day that inaugurates His kingdom of glory on earth. It is the day in which Christ is perfected in His people. It is the day in which He comes to be glorified in His saints (2 Thessalonians 1.9-10). Glory is the perfection of God accomplished in His Son and worked in a people who are a new race in His likeness. We are to be growing in His light. In other words, our lives are to become brighter and brighter with His light, to become more and more righteous. The world and all around us will remain dark, but we are to live in His light. As Paul said, we are sons of light and sons of day (1 Thessalonians 5.4-6). Walking in His light is the path of the righteous. His light reveals true righteousness, which is what is right by God's divine law, so that we might walk in it, practicing it daily. Let us walk on the path of the righteous, practicing righteousness, for the reward is great! The reward is glory in His coming kingdom.