Homiletics Carl Thrun

Philippians 3: 7-9
SERMON

Intro.: How can I win the good favor of my god? What can I do to please my god? -- This has been the cry of man throughout the ages. Pagan lands have devised all sorts of ways to become worthy in the eyes of their gods in order to deserve a good life after death. History records instances of people who have lain on steel spikes for years, people who have torn their hair out by the roots, and people who have burned off their limbs, all to win favor with their gods so that they might achieve a good life after death. The Germans had their Valhalla, the American Indians their Happy Hunting Grounds, and the Greeks their Elysian Fields. These were all places where life would continue after death in supreme happiness. This is what they set their eyes upon, and this is what they worked for. And so, man is always trying to gain the supreme happiness of a life after death by his own deeds. By doing everything as he imagines it to be right, he thinks that his god can only look upon him as a good man, and not as a bad man. In other words, he thinks that by his own works he can make himself righteous. How often you and I are inclined to think that because we have done such and such a good deed, lived such and such a life, or given so and so much to church and charity we have thereby earned righteousness for ourselves. Our human pride tells us that by doing such things we cannot be anything else but righteous. Our text, however, tells us that BY OURSELVES WE ARE UNABLE TO BECOME RIGHTEOUS; BUT THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST GOD PARDONS OUR SINS AND WE BECOME RIGHTEOUS IN HIS SIGHT.

IA1: What does it mean to be righteous? Righteousness means the right relation to God. It is a walking hand in hand with God, just as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden walked and talked with God. Adam and Eve were created righteous by God. Being created in God's image, they were perfect and did only what was right. God's will

was their will. The bond connecting man with God was like a bridge connecting two cities which would otherwise be separated by a river. The relationship was one of peace and unity. But when man fell into sin, this wonderful relationship was broken. Man was separated from God, even as the two cities would be separated, if the bridge were blown up. Man no longer could nor did he want to do God's will, because in sin man was warring and fighting against God; and for this reason righteousness was no longer his glorious possession. By sinning man destroyed the right relationship to God.

IA2: Within his heart man feels this separation from God. He realizes that he has lost something. This he does not like, for no one likes to experience a loss. But still man thinks he is a pretty good fellow. Human pride won't let him acknowledge defeat. And so, many people try to win righteousness by works. By themselves they want to win back a right relationship with God. In trying to bring righteousness into their grasp, heathen countries have created their own gods. To these man-made images they can make themselves righteous, either by torture or good works. So also Christians would reconstruct and rebuild the bridge between themselves and God. They too create their own gods. The rich man boasts of the money he gave to church and charity. His god? -- Money! The poor man boasts of his sufferings. Misery is his god. There are those who think that by sacrificing the flesh, such as by not eating, not drinking, not smoking, leading an unmarried life, and so on, that by doing these things they are gaining righteousness for themselves. There are even some who think that by the mere act of coming to church Sunday after Sunday they are doing all that is necessary. Righteousness is theirs. Deeds! Deeds! Deeds! That is their cry. "God owes me something. Look what I've done!" St Paul says in v. 4 of this chapter: "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh,

I more." Paul did all that was humanly possible to keep the letter of the law. He lived a life of good works. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, adhering to the traditions of his fathers as any of the strictest of the Pharisees might do. Thus, if good works could gain righteousness for anybody, Paul of all people was worthy of it.

IB1: In order that we might better understand exactly what righteousness is, let us take a look at the cause of unrighteousness; for it is impossible to solve any problem without first knowing exactly what the problem is. The problem is simply this: We are born in sin, and thus are under God's wrath. When Adam and Eve fell into sin, sin was passed down from generation to generation. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 51: 5) The bridge connecting man with God was broken, and sin took over. Sin has permeated man's whole being. God, on the other hand, is holy. He says, "I, the Lord, your God, am holy." (Lev. 19: 2) Because God is holy, He hates sin. He wants us to be holy, even as He is holy. "I am the almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect." (Gen. 17: 1) God's judgment upon sin is death, for the "wages of sin is death." (Rom. 6: 23) Sin is the cause of unrighteousness, and, therefore, sin must be conquered to obtain righteousness.

IB2: In recognizing his sin man looks for ways by which he might overcome sin, and one way which he trys is to do the Law of God. Yet, try as we may, we cannot keep God's Law. God has never set His law out as one of the ways to life. In trying to gain righteousness man has set it out as one of the ways to life. We simply cannot rid ourselves of sin. "There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not." (Eccl. 7: 20) Because we cannot rid ourselves of sin, it is impossible for us to reconstruct the bridge between ourselves and God. Works of the Law are worthless for righteousness.

St Paul tells us in our text: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss..." Those things by which he had once hoped to gain eternal life, he rejected, realizing that they would cause the loss of his own soul.

IIA: But why, for what purpose did the Apostle count all things loss? Out text says: "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and 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." Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law and won righteousness for us. God in His love and mercy for man has reconstructed the bridge. He sent His only begotten Son into the world to redeem us from the curse of the Law. Christ suffered the torments of hell for you, for me, for those who have lived, and for those who are yet to live, when He died on the cross. He was forsaken of God. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yes, He was forsaken of God as you and I deserve to be forsaken. And why? So that you and I might again have righteousness. God visited the punishment for our sins upon Christ Himself as if He Himself were the sinner. Now, as a result of Christ's death, God is no longer disposed to count our sins against us. Christ earned righteousness for us.

IIB1: Let us not resist God's gift of salvation and righteousness, offered to us through Christ. We should count our own righteousness as worthless. Every time we look upon ourselves as pretty good fellows, every time we pride ourselves in the fact that we have given so and so much to church and charity, every time we boast to ourselves of the good lives we have led we are resisting God's gift of salvation and righteousness, offered to us through Christ. We are denying Christ, saying that we no longer need Him. "I have suffered the loss

of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." To win Christ we must accept the fact that our own doings are absolutely worthless. We are not self-sufficient, as our human pride would have us believe. By ourselves we cannot do the will of God.

IIB2: When we acknowledge the fact that our own deeds are useless, detestable in the Sight of God, we should then cling to the cross of Christ. We should accept Christ by faith to have this gift of righteousness. This is what Paul did, for he says, "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." Having faith in Christ, believing that He earned salvation for us without any merit or worthyness on our part whatsoever, we thereby receive God's gift of righteousness. Faith is the taking of the free gift of God, the opposite of all works. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2: 8,9) In looking at us through the atonement of Christ, God no longer sees our sins, but rather He sees us as righteous and perfect men. Having the righteousness which is of God by faith, we are now in a new relationship to God in which He ceases to count our sins against us. We are found in Christ.

IIC: Now we Christians have this righteousness of God. We have faith. We have received this faith through the Gospel. Yes, in faith you and I have won the righteousness of Christ. It was given to us without any act or deed on our part. But yet, you and I still have the Old Adam, and this Old Adam hates to admit defeat. He would have us hearken back to self and our own righteousness. Let us remember that

the Gospel (or) the way that Christ died for our sins, is the power for faith unto life. Only by using the Gospel, clinging to the cross of Christ, can we renew our faith, and thereby grow in the knowledge of Christ. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. (Rom 1: 16) Let us count everything else as loss "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ jesus." To learn more of Christ, our Savior, to love Him even as He loved us, -- this should be the uppermost desire of our lives. In the cross of Christ our salvation is sure. We again have life and are again bound hand in hand with God. The bridge is repaired. Righteousness is ours.

Amen.

Hymns 3
400
394 8:00
47 10:45