

When poverty leads to riches

"By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight.... The righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed ... even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe" (Romans 3:20-22).

Some people feel apprehensive lest laying stress on such texts as this should discredit the law. But God who wrote the text may be left to care for the honor of His own law. It is to the everlasting credit of the law that it cannot justify the transgressor.

The law requires in man the perfect righteousness manifested in the life of Christ. No man ever lived as Christ lived--all are guilty. The perfection and majesty of the law leads sinners to cry out, "What shall we do?"

Sometimes the idea comes that if Christ would only wipe out the record of the past, the individual might then get along very well. That was the trouble with the Jews (Rom. 10:2, 3). There is no one on earth who in himself can do one deed as pure and as free from selfishness as though Christ had done it. "Whatever is not from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23).

There never was a better man than Paul, as a man. If anyone outside of Christ ever did a good deed, Paul did. Yet he had to count all things he had but "loss," that he might gain Christ (Phil. 3:4-8). The psalmist says that God withholds no good thing from those who walk uprightly. If Paul, before he found Christ, had had something in his nature that was good, he might have taken these things along with him. But he counted all as loss.

The plan of salvation is one of giving and taking--giving on the part of God and taking on the part of man. The pride of the heart resents this dependence upon God; but we are pensioners, beggars, miserable, and poor, and naked. [1]

"You know how generous our Lord Jesus Christ has been: he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that through his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9, NEB).

Note:

1. Bible Studies on the Book of Romans, p. 7.