



# The Voice of Truth



July 22, 2012

## What Would You Ask Him?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

If you could have the complete fulfillment of one desire, hope, or longing, what would it be? Would you ask for happiness? Would you ask for physical health? Such a question opens so wide a field for thought that the imagination is staggered.

Has a person of history grappled with this question? Yes! David, the "man after God's own heart," not only grappled with it, but also dared to make reply. He said: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his temple," (Psalm 27:4). David, desiring "one thing" of the Lord, shows he was not a man of divided aims or allegiance. David longed to ascribe praise and honor and glory unto God. He loved to go to the place of public worship and praise his God. He loved to worship God. How needed this attribute is today!

Every child of God on earth today should make David's goal the end and aim of his life. But, sadly they don't. Too many professed Christians are spiritually dead. They are too religious to commit themselves to the world and too

worldly to commit themselves to the Lord. They are seeking to serve two masters, but Jesus said: "No man can serve two masters ..." (Matthew 6:24). If a person loves the world, he becomes an enemy of God (James 4:4). So many luke warm Christians are "halt" as were those of old "between two opinions," (1 Kings 18:21).

The true servant of the Master is characterized by absolute commitment. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ...," (1 Thessalonians 5:23). To sanctify is to set something apart for sacred or holy uses. The very meaning of the term "sanctification," is used to describe the follower of Christ. It is an absolute commitment, dedication, consecration to reverence the Lord in our heart. Since Christians have been set apart for God's purpose, they are to continue to live consecrated, holy and pure lives before God and the world.

Do we live as God's sanctified people? Are we truly demonstrating actions that we are "set apart" for God's service? ♦

## Do You Just Belong?

Are you an active member?  
The kind that would be missed?  
Or are you just contented that your name is on the list?  
Do you attend the meeting and mingle with the flock?  
Or do you stay away to criticize and knock?  
Do you take an active part to help the work along?  
Or are you satisfied to only just belong?  
Think this over, my dear friends:  
I know you won't go wrong.  
Are you an active member, or do you  
just belong? ♦

*None are so empty as those who are full  
Of themselves*

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## Righteousness Apart from Works

By Jonathan L. Perz

In Paul's epistle to the Romans, Paul cites a passage from one of David's Psalms to demonstrate that "*God imputes righteousness apart from works*" (**Rom. 4:5-8**). So, how does God "impute righteousness" here and what "works" does the apostle speak of?

When we go back and look at the Psalm Paul cites, it is amazing to note how similar David's words are to the covenant we, as Christians, are under.

David says, "*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit*" (**Psalms 32:1-2**; cf. **Rom. 4:7-8**).

First of all, it is critical to note that Paul equates "imputes righteousness" (**Rom. 4:6**) with "does not impute iniquity" (**Rom. 4:8**; **Psa. 32:2**). So, contrary to the claims of many, there is not some type of miraculous transfer of the Lord's righteousness to a Christian when they believe, God simply does not credit or count one's sins against them when they trust in Him. The important question, however, is what is necessary to "trust in Him" (i.e., faith).

Secondly, it is important to recognize that the "works" Paul has in mind here will identify the "works" he has in mind throughout the book of Romans. As a matter of fact, these are the same "works" he basically has in view in all of his writings. Paul's first century readers would readily identify with whatever "works" he has in view. Chapter 2:17-29 sets the stage for Paul's argument, and clearly, he has the law of Moses squarely in view.

Thus, we must ask as we read, is Paul striving to argue "no works" are necessary to obtain righteousness (as so many believe today)? Is Paul using this quote of David to demonstrate that all one has to do is "believe" that Jesus Christ died for our sins in order to obtain righteousness and that there is nothing else required (i.e., "no works" are necessary)? Or is Paul demonstrating throughout this context that one cannot and will not find salvation by "works" of the Law of Moses, whether they are Jew or Gentile? Let's consider this question.

As we examine more thoroughly the context of **Psalm 32**, we learn that David did not believe that nothing was required of him except his "faith" (i.e., believing that God would forgive him, as most characterize faith in this context today). **Psalm 32:3-4** tells us that when David "kept

silent" (i.e., did nothing), he suffered greatly. On the other hand, David says, "*I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin*" (**Psa. 32:5-6**).

So, David clearly did not find righteousness apart from **ALL** "works" since two critical "works" were done by him. He "acknowledged" and "confessed" his sins (cf. **Prov. 28:13**). David concluded "*For this cause everyone who is godly shall pray to You in a time when You may be found*" (**Psa. 32:6**). Thus, prayer is the medium by which one acknowledges and confesses his sins. He concludes his Psalm saying, "*Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but he who trusts in the Lord, mercy shall surround him*" (**Psa. 32:10**). Hence, he characterizes *acknowledging* and *confessing* his sins in *prayer* as *trusting in the Lord*.

Not only is it amazing how David's prescription to those under God's covenant for receiving the forgiveness of sins is so similar to what John sets forth, it should not surprise us that *trusting in God* includes not only relying on His promises, but also doing what He commands to obtain those promises. John wrote, "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" (**1 John 1:8-9**). When we deny our sins (i.e. do nothing), our sins are imputed to us. When we do what God says (i.e., trust in Him), our sins are not imputed to us (i.e., we find forgiveness and cleansing). It is important to note that John's conditional statement is written to Christians. It is written to those who are "in Him" through baptism, having their sins cleansed by His blood (cf. **Eph. 1:7**; **Gal. 3:26-27**; **Rom. 6:1-6**).

Overall, this demonstrates that Paul did not have "all works" in view when he wrote Romans, but a specific set of "works." The greater context reveals that Paul has the "works" of the Law of Moses in view. He is telling those Jews (and Gentiles) of the first century (and all ages) that works of the Law of Moses would not make them righteous. Rather, by faith in Jesus Christ we find our justification, peace and grace (cf. **Rom. 5:1-2**).

Nevertheless, by citing **Psalm 32**, Paul gives us an inspired commentary. He does not only show the prophetic nature of David's words (since in David's age, the law of

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Moses demanded animal sacrifice for his sin, in addition to a penitent heart). He also demonstrates what it means for a Christian (a baptized believer— cf. **Matt. 28:19**) to obtain righteousness by faith. A Christian must trust in the words of the Lord Jesus. We will not find righteousness by doing what Moses commanded us to do, but we will find righteousness by doing what the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded us to do (cf. **Luke 1:6**).

This was an essential message in the first century. It is just as essential today! We must wholly trust in the Lord and do (i.e., practice, work) whatever “works” He has taught us to do (cf. **1 John 3:7; Matt. 28:20; Prov. 3:5-6**) to obtain righteousness (cf. **Heb. 11:4**).

When we live this way, the only One we can rightfully boast in is the Lord. Our boast cannot be in our own merit, nor can we argue the Lord owes us anything, since we have simply done what was commanded of us (cf. **Luke**

**17:6-10**). Instead, as Paul concluded in his epistle to the Galatians, our boast can only be in the Lord. He wrote, *“For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But **God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.”* (**Gal. 6:13-15**, emphasis mine, jlp).

Only those Christians who trust God as David trusted God will find “righteousness apart from works”! Only those who trust Jesus, and do what He says to become a Christian, will find the cleansing of their sins (cf. **Acts 22:16**). Therefore, hear Him, believe Him, confess Him, repent and be baptized (**Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:9-10**)! Begin your walk by faith today!

*Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦*

## “At Your Word I Will ...”

By Jarrod Jacobs

**Luke 5:1-11** records the miracle of the great catch of fish by Peter in the lake Gennesaret, or Galilee. This account begins with Christ preaching to the people. He did this by getting into Peter’s boat (**v. 3**) and teaching the people from the boat, while they were gathered at the shore.

When Christ finished speaking, He commanded Peter to launch out “for a catch” (**v. 4**). Peter’s response was: *“Master, we toiled all night, and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets”* (**v. 5**).

The words Peter spoke on this occasion meant something. The word “master” generally denotes a teacher (Ex: **Matt. 19:16, 23:8**). In this case, “master” “denotes a chief, a commander, overseer, .... It is used by the disciples in addressing the Lord, in recognition of his authority rather than His instruction” (Vine’s Amp., p. 506). J.W. McGarvey said “master” “indicates a superior” (Four-Fold Gospel, p. 164). Peter didn’t need a lesson in fishing. He knew how to fish, where to fish, when to fish, etc. He needed to recognize the One in authority, and he did!

The miracle performed on this occasion was more than simply catching fish. The miracle is also seen in the MANNER in which the fish were caught. The *time* for the type of fishing Peter, James, and John did was at night (**v. 5a**). The *place* for this type of fishing was near the shore, in the

shallow water. Thus, we see that Jesus tells Peter to go to the wrong part of the lake at the wrong time of the day to catch fish!

Christ’s command to go during the day into the deep part of the lake was foreign to what Peter had been doing. But, in respect for Christ’s authority, Peter did it. What was the result? *“They enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were braking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came, and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink .... he was astonished ... at the catch of fish they had taken”* (**Lk. 5:6-9**).

Why did Peter catch such a large amount of fish? It was because after Christ told him to go, Peter was obedient. He said, *“At your word I will...”* What does this event teach us?

## The Things We Do Must Be Done In Accordance With God’s Word.

Peter said, *“At your word...”*. Christ’s word was contrary to many things Peter and these men knew about fishing. Nevertheless, because Christ said it, Peter did it! Christ’s command to go into the deep for fish was...

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**1. Contrary to Tradition:** Peter could have disobeyed the Lord and justified it by saying, "We have always gone at night, in the shallow water to catch fish."

**2. Contrary to Parents' Teaching:** We understand that at this time, the sons followed in the trade of their fathers. Therefore, Peter's father would have taught him to get fish in the shallow water at night if he was to make a living. Peter might have said, "My dad and granddad did not do it this way."

**3. Contrary to the actions of friends:** "No one else" was doing what Peter was doing (Lk. 5:7). Many times, people will feel justified in their lifestyle by noting the number of people who either are or are not doing what they are doing. Remember II Corinthians 10:12!

**4. Contrary to Financial sense:** "Fishing was a prosperous trade on the lake of Galilee" (Four-Fold Gospel, p. 162). Peter's way was proven to be successful, but what the Lord told Peter to do was the opposite of what those folks found to be successful. So, would Peter go against "common sense" to do what the Lord said?

Peter went against all these things and obeyed the Lord. In so doing, he was blessed with fish that day. As he continued to obey the Lord, Peter was blessed in many other ways, both physical and spiritual. Our response needs to be the same. If Christ said it, we do it!! Even if this means...

**1. Contradicting Tradition:** The Jews in the New Testament had to come to grips with this, and so do we! Simply doing the same thing consistently for a long time does not make it right. Only what is revealed in Scripture is right!

**2. Contradicting our parents:** Remember **Matthew 10:34-37**? We must love our parents, but not more than God! God must come first, and not any man!

**3. Contradicting our friends:** Our friends are not going to judge us on the last day. Christ is (**Jn. 5:22, Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:16**)! Just like our parents, what our friends do or do not do does not determine if a thing is right or wrong.

**4. Contradicting financial sense:** Those who truly follow the gospel do not do so for the money or physical gain (I

**Tim. 6:10; Matt. 6:19-21**). We do it for a higher and nobler purpose, the salvation of our souls (**Matt. 16:26**)!

**Our Obedience To Christ Must Be Voluntary.**

The last part of Peter's response was: "I will..." Again, understand that Peter recognized Christ the Master was speaking to him! He was present at the wedding when Mary told the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (**Jn. 2:5**). He understood also that he needed to willingly obey the Lord.

In like manner, our obedience to the Lord is voluntary, not compulsory, or mandatory! Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (**Jn. 14:15**). Friends, how much do we love Christ? In like manner, **Matthew 11:28-30** is called "The Great Invitation" for a reason. Christ offered an invitation, NOT an ultimatum!! God wants His people to worship and obey Him because they want to, not because they are forced!

God has always allowed men the choice as to whether or not they would obey Him. This truth is seen in **Genesis 2:15-17, Exodus 16:4, Deuteronomy 6:10-15, 27:11-13, Judges 2:15-19**, and into the New Testament where Paul makes it plain that God wants a "willing mind" (**II Cor. 8:12, 9:7**).

Yet, if we are following the Lord, obeying Him merely because of...

- 1. **Tradition** – We've always gone here.
- 2. **Our Parents** – They brought me up "under this roof"
- 3. **Our Friends** – They are going here.
- 4. **Money** – Some belong to the church for the financial gains that can come from the associations in this place.

If these are our reasons for following the Lord, then we are doing it for the wrong reasons and are in sin! We must follow the Lord with **faith** and **conviction**. Let us follow the Lord willingly because we love Him and wish to do what He has said (**Jn. 14:15; Matt. 22:37-39**). Let us be as Peter and say, "Master ... at your word I will..." *The Old Paths - 6/12/12*

**About the Hillcrest church of Christ**

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**Schedule of Assembly**

**Bible Study:** Sunday, 9:00am  
**Worship Service:** Sunday, 10:00am  
**Bible Study:** Wednesday, 7:00pm\*

\*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month