

## THE RIGHTS OF HEIRSHIP

Today in the United States of America, everyone is concerned about personal rights, or civil rights, or right to get an equal share. This is the hype of the 1990's. We have equal rights for women, blacks, Indians, minorities, handicapped, animals, nature, and just about anything that you can think of. People are so concerned about having rights that they forget what to use them for when they get them. Although it is not bad to want to have rights, it is more important to have rights that symbolize something consequential. The reason that most people even worry about what they have a "right" to is because they have not found out what truly important rights they have as a human being.

From the time Adam and Eve were kicked out of the garden of Eden for disobeying God until the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross, Mankind did not have the opportunity to have a personal relationship with God. They had no "right" to a personal relationship with God.

In Romans 5:18, the first half of the verse reads, "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men..." Let's look at the word "condemnation" a bit closer. This word used for "condemnation" is the Greek word katakrima which suggests "1) the fact of a crime and 2)

the imputation of a crime." It is also "the sentence pronounced, the condemnation with a suggestion of the punishment following."<sup>1</sup> This meaning tells a little about the degree of condemnation that Adam brought the world into. Through his sin, Adam brought on death to the world. This is the "punishment following" that I mentioned. This death was not an immediate physical death for Adam or for Eve. Rather it was an immediate spiritual death. Adam's condemnation even affected the natural world. In Genesis 3:17-19 it speaks of the curse on the ground.

Do you remember sitting in your elementary class when you were little? I am sure YOU were sitting there being a good, quiet little student. However, one of the class clowns was just blabbing his mouth off for everyone, including the teacher, to hear. Then it hits. Not only does the class clown get into trouble, the whole class does. Everyone is assigned extra homework or staying after class. Just as the student's transgression affect all the students in that class, so also did <sup>ADAM'S</sup> ~~the~~ condemnation affect all mankind. The penalty for the transgression is not papers or detention, however; ~~It~~ is death. The death is not only physical death, but spiritual death (separation from God).

God, in His infinite wisdom and love for mankind, had a plan. God knew that a man could not lead a perfect lifestyle because of the sin nature that he carried from the fall. Therefore, God sent His son born unto a virgin by the

inspiration of the Holy Spirit to save the day. Since the Jesus had no earthly father, he had no sin nature and would be able to bridge the gap between man and God.

In the second half of Romans 5:18, the text reads, "so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men." The word for "justification" in the Greek carries the idea of an "acquittal."<sup>2</sup> That is, through the death and resurrection of Jesus, mankind was given a method of having the condemnation removed from themselves.

The word "acquittal" is used often in the legal courtroom. When a person has committed a crime that either cannot be proven or is proven innocent, they are acquitted. In this situation however, Jesus "proved" us innocent by taking away our sin by his death on the cross. Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary says it this way, "God accounts or transfers the righteousness of Christ to those who trust in Him."<sup>3</sup> This statement demonstrates that the acquittal process is not automatic. For the acquittal to take place, the person must accept Jesus as Lord of their life.

Basically the situation is like a court case. A man committed a crime. The Judge has made arrangements for the particular crime by having the District Attorney pay for the damage done. If the man asks to be forgiven for his crime and trusts in his District Attorney, then the man is forgiven

and is even given a job working for the District Attorney and Judge both.

The crime that was committed was the fall of man. God, the Judge, made arrangements so that we didn't have to suffer the consequences of the fall. Those consequences are eternity in hell forever separated from God. But since the judge made a way out by having the attorney pay for the crime, the guilt is removed if an acquittal is sought and trust is put in Jesus, our "District Attorney". Later the job that we do for the Judge and District Attorney is the job of spreading the news about the acquittal which is salvation and forgiveness of sin. By the way the scenario does not include plea bargaining. Only the prescribed measures will bring an acquittal.

"But wait," you say, "Didn't you start out talking about rights." Well, I'm glad you brought that up. I was just coming to that. Since Jesus died on the cross, every man, woman, and child has the right to petition for an acquittal! As long as they follow the plan laid out by the Great Judge (God) for salvation, God will forgive them for their sins. You also have the right to be free from the separation that many people have between them and God. You have the right to live your life knowing that you are going to heaven to be with Jesus. You have the right to live in harmony with those around you knowing that you don't have to scratch and claw to find something that doesn't matter once you get it. You have

the right to not care about unimportant earthly rights because you know that God has already provided for everything that you need. You have the right to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind.

Maybe some of you are saying, "So what!? I'm already saved. I knew all this." Well then maybe you'll be interested to know that you have another right. You have the right to hold all of these rights over the head of the one that helped you lose them in the first place. And that is Satan. Satan tried to take us away from God, but he just made a way to allow us to kick him down with God's Word.

Maybe, though, there are some of you here that are not saved or you are out of fellowship with the Lord. There may even be some of you here today that Satan has been deceiving you to think that he is stronger than you even if you are a Christian. Well your rights no matter which category you may be in today, are still intact and you can grab hold of all of them. Jesus Christ died so that every person in this world could have these rights. Won't you join me here at the altar if you would like to remind yourself, the world, and the devil of your rights.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>W. E. Brown, "Condemnation," in The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, eds. John R. Kohlenberger III and James A. Swanson (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1984), 214.

<sup>2</sup>George R. Berry, "Justification," in The Interlinear Literal Translation of the Greek New Testament with Greek-English Lexicon to the New Testament, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 28.

<sup>3</sup>Herbert Lockyer, Sr., "Righteousness," in Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, ed. Herbert Lockye, Sr., (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 918.

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