

## **Ole Miss FCA Weekly Devotional: 12/7/09**

*The Power and Passion of the Master Coach, Elliot Johnson*



### **Thought of the Week:**

God is Righteous

### **Verse of the Week:**

Glorious and majestic are His deeds, and His righteousness endures forever. Psalm 111:3

Ozzie Smith was one of the best defensive shortstops of all time. In 1987, Ozzie won his eighth consecutive Golden Glove award, started his fifth All-Star Game in a row, and led National League shortstops in fielding for the sixth time in seven years. Ozzie was so good, he was almost perfect defensively.

As good as Ozzie Smith was, his skills were still short of perfection. But are the deeds and decisions of anyone 100 percent perfect? Are all of God's dealings with man correct? Whose standards should be used to judge right or wrong? Is everything done by God right and just because He has said it is right and just? Could murder be right, if God declared it to be so?

The righteousness of God is the basis for the answers to these questions. God is so inherently good that allowing murder to be right would be contrary to His nature. Therefore, murder would never be right, and God would never declare it to be so. It is in the very nature of God to only do what is right. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) are not just rules God gave to frustrate mankind, but they are an expression of His nature.

God's righteousness is an application of His holiness. God's righteousness is the administering or enforcement of His holiness. To describe righteousness, we could say that God is absolutely right in everything He does because it is His nature to be right, and it is impossible for God's actions to oppose His nature.

How is God's righteousness expressed in our world? First, we see it in His law. The law of God is as perfect as He is. Psalm 19:7-9 says, "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous." The law of the LORD is an expression of His very nature. It is as perfect as He is. God's Word is the standard for life, for by it we will be judged.

Americans seem to have a problem trying to decide what is right. The absolutes of God's Word, upon which much of our Constitution is based, are being challenged. Truth has become whatever the individual decides it should be. Everything has become relative. Rules are being ignored. What would happen if the NFL decided to play football without any rules or standards by which to measure the game, and the players could individually make up their own rules? What if no absolute rules could be enforced? One player may be penalized for an infraction, but another player may get no penalty for the same deed. Someone could say that he scored a touchdown when he crossed the goal line, but another could say he didn't. There would be mass confusion on the field, just as there is mass confusion in our society as we debate what is right. The individual's choice has more authority than an absolute standard of rightness. That's why women can choose to freely kill their unborn babies. If the standard for rightness is the individual's choice, then what if some- one decides that murder or rape is right? Who is to say what is wrong? Where is America headed?

Israel was headed in the same direction back in 700 B.C., and the cry of the prophets was for the nation to turn back to God. Isaiah 1:4 says, "Alas, sinful nation, people weighed down with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, sons who act corruptly! They have abandoned the LORD, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away from Him" (NAS). To abandon the Lord is to abandon His Word and His standard for life. Israel also placed individual choice over God's standard. Isaiah prophesied, "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter . . . (woe to those) who justify the wicked for a bribe and take away the rights of the ones who are in the right" (Isaiah 5:20, 23 NAS). Sound familiar? We have forsaken the truth of God for a lie. The humanists (those who place man above all) have written a document of their beliefs. Their section on ethics states, "We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stem from human need and interest." Concerning religion, they state: We believe, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species." What an ungodly lie! No wonder we are declining as a nation of power and influence. God will surely judge America!

Secondly, we see God's righteousness expressed in His actions. Millard J. Erickson says, "Because God is righteous, measuring up to the standard of His law, we can trust Him. He is honest in His dealings. We need not be afraid to enter into a relationship with Him." Jesus, the perfect revelation of God, conformed perfectly to God's standard. Romans 10:4 says, "Christ is the end [completion] of the law . . . for righteousness." Only one person throughout all history has lived up to God's standards. That person is Christ. Therefore, Paul could say of all other men, "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10). Righteousness is a matter of living up to the standard set for a relationship. Those who fulfill the requirements of the relationship in which they stand are righteous. If a ball player were to do everything a coach demanded and to fulfill every expectation of the coach, then that player would be righteous in relation to the coach. He would have conformed perfectly to the coach. But while a player may perform some correct actions exactly as the coach desired, it would be impossible for the player to act and perform perfectly in every situation. The same goes for our relationship with God. There is no one who is righteous. None of us by our own effort can live up to God's perfect standard and be called righteous. A righteous person is someone who stands in a right relationship with God all the time. The good news is that a person can be declared righteous (given a right standing before God) on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ! The work of Christ on the cross is applied to those who receive Him. In other words, His righteousness is applied to those who trust Him. We stand in a right relationship with God because of what Christ did for us! Genesis 15:6 says, "Abraham believed the LORD, and He credited it to him as righteousness." Romans 5:1 says, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Romans 1:16-17 says the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel and that the righteous man shall live by faith. In Christ, our sin is erased and righteousness is imputed. Do you see why a salvation via good works is impossible? Salvation is the gift of God, not of our own works, lest any man should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9). 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "He [God] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (NAS). Praise to our Lord Jesus Christ for paying the debt we owed and giving all believers a right relationship with God!

Ozzie Smith was a great fielder, with an excellent fielding percentage. But he wasn't perfect all the time. By contrast, the Lord Jesus Christ perfectly pleased the Father one hundred percent of the time by living a righteous life. Only through trusting Him can we inherit eternal life. Understanding the righteousness of God now will change our actions in the future.

Time Out:

- (1) What "gospel" have you believed concerning righteousness?
- (2) Are you hoping to live a good enough life so God will let you into heaven? Or, are you trusting the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ?
- (3) Are you keeping track of your good and bad deeds, hoping that the good will outweigh the bad? If so, you have a "salvation by good works" and will never enter the kingdom of God. Remember, there is none that are righteous. Stop counting deeds and begin trusting the Savior, for the only way to have a right standing with God is to have Christ's righteousness applied to your life. He was your (our) substitute. He lived a perfect life and paid for your sin on the cross! He was raised from the dead on the third day. Righteousness is credited to any one by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Paul said, "for we maintain that a man is justified by faith" (Romans 3:28).
- (4) Read Psalm 119 and make a list of all the benefits for a person who walks in the Word of God. By walking in God's Word, you demonstrate your love for Him. Your daily walk will reflect the nature of your Savior.