

THE DUNG PILE OF HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS

by K. R. Blades

It is often heard within the prevailing philosophies of the day that people are basically good by nature. There is in all of us, it is said, a 'core of goodness' which in truth is the 'real us.' People are intrinsically good and this professed 'intrinsic goodness of man' is now fervently being set forth and upheld as a fundamental truth which must finally be acknowledged. It must be acknowledged, we are told, and acted upon. It must come out from behind the shroud of archaic and impeditive thought, like that of Bible believing Christianity, which has stalled the advancement of man and hindered the development of the power of human potential. The fruit of this 'core of goodness' must finally be allowed to spring forth and flourish on the stage of human history. This is a 'new age,' we are told, in which mankind is casting off the shackles of archaic thought that have bound it for so long. The time has come in man's development for man to be able to know and fulfill his destiny through a proper understanding and appreciation for who and what he really is. This is what we are told, and at the center of all of this realization of who and what man really is, is the essential truth of the 'intrinsic goodness of man.'

It should come as no surprise to us that this is the world's thinking and that men by nature fail to see themselves for the sinners and unrighteous beings that they really are. It is the nature of sin itself to contradict God and to 'change the truth of God into a lie.' When God, therefore, declares that men are "dead in trespasses and sins" and that "there is none righteous, no, not one," it is the 'nature of the beast of sin' to deny what God says and to contradict it. And this is just what men do.

It also should come as no surprise to us that the lie about man having an 'intrinsic goodness' is actually the foundation upon which rests every perversion of the Gospel of Christ. The Gospel is perverted when men's good works, of whatever kind, are added to faith in Christ as a requirement for justification. The mixture of good works with faith in Christ "perverts the gospel of Christ," and the result is "another gospel; which is not another." It's a false gospel that can save no one. Men's good works are repulsive to God's Holiness and Righteousness, and His Justice will not accept them. If a man's good works could contribute in any way to his salvation, then, as the apostle Paul declares, the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for no reason at all.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, THEN CHRIST IS DEAD IN VAIN." (Galatians 2:21)

But the lie of man having an 'intrinsic goodness' teaming up with the pride of man's heart deceives many into thinking that their works have value to them in God's eyes and that they are acceptable to His Holiness and Righteousness. They, therefore, believe perversions of the Gospel of Christ and reject the gospel of justification by grace through faith without works.

In the light of all of this it would be profitable to briefly remind ourselves of exactly what God says about what men are by nature, and what His own estimate is regarding men's good works. For in the face of the prevalence of 'the lie' it is easy to become desensitized to just how false the idea of man's 'intrinsic goodness' really is.

In Philippians 3 we have a passage in which the apostle Paul through the use of one very particular and descriptive word sets forth for us just how it is that God views men's own righteousness. What makes this testimony of special importance is the fact that Paul sets it forth as one who used to believe he possessed by nature an 'intrinsic goodness.' Paul had been a Pharisee, who in accordance with Pharisaic doctrine believed he possessed a natural righteousness and holiness in God's sight. He, therefore, as he says had "confidence in the flesh." He had confidence that he by nature was good, and that he not only could, but actually did, bring forth works and deeds that God would accept and would be "gain" to him in God's sight. But all this he found out to be untrue. However, not only was it false, it was outlandishly false, as he declares in a very descriptive way when he 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,

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:" (Philippians 3:7 9)

"AND DO COUNT THEM BUT DUNG" , that's what Paul realized all his own good works really were in God's sight. They were "dung." They were the waste products of a defiled nature. They were not a sweet smelling savor to God at all. Instead, they had the stinking repulsive odor of manure to Him. They were refuse; a good for nothing accumulated dung pile. What Paul realized about his own good works is just what God had declared to Israel in Isaiah's day.

"But WE ARE ALL AS AN UNCLEAN THING AND ALL OUR RIGHTEOUSNESSES ARE AS FILTHY RAGS; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Isaiah 64:6)

There it is again! Men's righteousnesses; men's good works and deeds; are "as filthy rags" to God. They are not clean and pure with the attractiveness of finely woven cloth or exquisite lace work. They are not beautiful to Him and lovely to behold like a tapestry of fine workmanship. But in stark contrast they are "as filthy rags." They are as rags that have been wiped in some foul and offensive excretion and are therefore filthy and unclean.

What a stinging rebuke to 'the lie' about the 'intrinsic goodness' of man. In truth men by nature are sinners, and are completely unable to bring forth any good works God's Justice will accept. The best of man is but "dung" and "filthy rags" in God's sight. No wonder man needs a Saviour! Even his best efforts, as Paul himself testifies to, and is evidence of, are but the foul stench of worthless refuse.

But, oh, what a difference there is in both the person and work of our Saviour Jesus Christ! He, being the Son of God, knew no sin. And in the days of His flesh on this earth He pleased God in everything He did, just as He testified in John 8:29, saying,...

"I do always those things that please him (God the Father)." (John 8:29)

Every thought, word, and deed of the Lord was a delight to God the Father. He, thus, was by nature the very thing we are not, holy, righteous, and good. In this He was able to be our Redeemer and Saviour. And what He was able to be, He became. On the cross of Calvary He died in our place, suffering the debt and penalty of our sins. He propitiated God's Justice for us by the shedding of His own blood. And in this offering for sin, in contrast to the 'dung of our own righteousness,' there arose a sweet smelling savor to God. By His perfect sacrifice for us Christ freed God's Justice to be able to forgive us our sins and to impute unto us the very thing we could never produce on our own, the righteousness of God. As Paul joyfully declares in II Corinthians 5:21,...

"For he (God the Father) hath made him (Jesus Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; THAT WE MIGHT BE MADE THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM." (II Corinthians 5:21)

What a glorious gospel, especially to us who believe! But also what a powerful protest from God to this world against both the vileness of men's sins and 'the lie' about the 'intrinsic goodness of man.' For it was for no other reason but that man is a sinner by nature and possesses no righteousness and goodness on his own, that the Son of God Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, went to the cross and died as our Substitute Redeemer. The cross of our Lord Jesus Christ stands in the pages of God's word and on the stage of human history as the most vigorous and thunderous denunciation there is against 'the lie' about the 'intrinsic goodness' of man. Again, the words of Paul to the Galatians resound with the protest.

"I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness *come* by the law, THEN CHRIST IS DEAD IN VAIN." (Galatians 2:21)

"Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: FOR IF THERE HAD BEEN A LAW GIVEN WHICH COULD HAVE GIVEN LIFE, VERILY RIGHTEOUSNESS SHOULD HAVE BEEN BY THE LAW.

But THE SCRIPTURE HATH CONCLUDED ALL UNDER SIN, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." (Galatians 3:21-22)

Useless and for no reason at all was the death of Christ if men are truly 'good by nature.' But the cross of Christ proves they aren't. Instead of believing 'the lie,' men need to count their own righteousness but "dung" and cast it upon the 'dung pile of human righteousness,' and in turn cast themselves in faith upon the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour, trusting in Him and His redemptive work on the cross for them as their only means of acceptance with God.

How is it with you? Are you counting on your own good works for your acceptance with God? Are you thinking that by doing good works you can make up for the sins that you have committed? Maybe you think that on judgment day God is going to put your sins on one side of a scale and your good works on the other, and if your good works are more than your sins then you will escape God's judgment. If you are thinking any of these things you need to realize that you are wrong and that your good works are nothing but "dung" to God. No, you can't justify yourself or make yourself righteous before God by anything that you do. But God is offering to "justify you freely by his grace through the

redemption that is in Christ Jesus," just as Romans 3:24 declares. The Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died upon the cross of Calvary in your place to pay for your sins and your unrighteousness. He was "delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," just as Romans 4:25 states. The one condition God has placed upon His offer to justify you is the condition of faith. Justification in God's sight is by grace through faith. As Romans 3:26 says,...

"That he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Romans 3:26)

And again,...

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Romans 4:5)

Faith is the issue of trust, reliance, or placing your complete confidence in someone. It is the issue of depending on them and what they have done, and not on yourself and what you can do. And that is what placing your faith in Jesus Christ means. This is what "believing in Jesus" means. You place your trust, confidence, reliance in Him and what He did for you on the cross for your salvation, and not in your own good works. You depend upon His death payment for your sins as the only means of your acceptance with God, and not on your works. When a person does that, God counts his faith for righteousness. God freely forgives him his sins and imputes unto him the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And at that moment, by grace through faith, he is justified unto eternal life.

This is the good news of the free gift of justification unto eternal life that God offers to everyone, including YOU. Don't try to establish your own righteousness before God, or put off the offer of God's grace to justify you freely right now. Instead, why not right now and right where you are "believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ." God can look upon your heart and He can see your faith, and He will do exactly what He says, He will count your faith for righteousness.