

3 *The Righteousness of the Saints*

The path of the righteous is level;
O upright One, you make the way of the
righteous smooth. (Isaiah 26:7)

Please note that, as this passage declares, it is God who makes the way of righteous level and smooth. None of us will ever stand before a holy God by our own efforts or religious merit. Let us not boast therefore about how much better we are than those poor, lost sinners all around us. *Are we any more deserving of the grace of God than they are?* We stand in right relationship with God only by the continual working of the grace of God—*as we die daily to our old selves and our old lives.*

No human righteousness will stand in the judgment day, only the righteousness we receive from Jesus Christ. In Spurgeon's words, "All true religion is the work of God.... It is a sin of the greatest magnitude to suppose that there is aught in the heart which can be acceptable unto God, save that which God himself has first created there."¹

In his commentary on Psalm 38, Martin Luther reminds us about the ways of our Lord:

It is God's nature to make something out of nothing; *hence one who is not yet nothing, out of him God cannot make anything....* Therefore God accepts only the forsaken, cures only the sick, gives sight only to the blind, restores life only to the dead, sanctifies only the sinners, gives wisdom only to the unwise. In short, He has mercy only on those who are wretched, and gives grace only to those who are not in grace. Therefore no proud saint, no wise or righteous person, can become God's material, and God's purpose cannot be fulfilled in him.² (Emphasis added)

Will we who call ourselves Christians therefore continue to boast that we are somebody or admit that, outside of Christ and His work of grace in our lives, we are nobody?

The *New King James Version* translates verse 7 with a fascinating difference: "The way of the just is uprightness; O Most Upright, You weigh the path of the just." In this translation, the verse seems to contradict itself because it states that the way of the just is upright, but then declares, "You weigh the path of the just." The righteous may *think* that they are fine,

that there is nothing more that needs to be done in their lives. It is those sinners out there in the world who need to change!

But the Bible reveals that revival begins in the house of God, and that judgment begins in the house of God, also. The righteous are the very ones whose *ways* God *weighs*! God looks at the paths of His people and searches out what is in their hearts. Consider for a moment all the scandals that have occurred in churches in our nation over the last couple of decades. Consider also that a recent survey by Arizona Christian University showed that only 6% of Americans who self-identify as Christians believe in the existence of the Holy Spirit! The article went on to state,

Strong majorities also errantly believe that all religious faiths are of equal value, people are basically good and that people can use acts of goodness to earn their way into Heaven. The study further showed that majorities don't believe in moral absolutes; consider feelings, experience, or the input of friends and family as their most trusted sources of moral guidance; and say that having faith matters more than which faith you pursue.³