

Glorified buzzards

In 1782, the 2nd Continental Congress officially declared the bald eagle the National Emblem of the United States. But, what most people do not know is that there was much controversy surrounding the choice of the eagle as the country's emblem.

Benjamin Franklin strongly opposed using the bald eagle saying, "For my part, I wish the eagle had not been chosen as the representative of this county. He is a bird of bad moral character; he does not get his living honestly. You may have seen him perched in some dead tree where, too lazy to fish for himself, he watches the labor of the fishing hawk and, when that diligent bird has at length taken a fish and is bearing it to his nest for his young ones, the bald eagle pursues him and takes the fish. With all this injustice, he is never in good case."

While the eagle, in all appearances is a majestic bird representing honor and courage, it is actually, by nature, a glorified buzzard, feeding himself by the labor of others or from road-kill. However, by no merit of its own, the bald eagle has been declared majestic, and is viewed to be honorable, and a symbol of the greatest and most courageous nation ever to exist on the face of this earth.

Likewise, by no merit of our own, God has declared us righteous in His eyes. But, to the religious world, we too are nothing but glorified buzzards. But to God we are the "apple of His eye", a symbol of His honor and majesty. To think that even the worst of sinners can be declared righteous in the eyes of God is an abomination even to the very elect.

Righteousness is the condition of being in *right* standing or relationship with God. This can only happen through total faith and dependence upon Christ, as the Bible says, *For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.* [Ephesians 2: 8]

There is no other way to be righteous and there is nothing we can do on our own to accomplish this. It's either all grace or all works and not a combination of the two.

Paul wrote in Romans 11: 6, *And if by grace, then it is no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.*

Righteousness is not a character trait of a Christian; but rather the Christian bears fruit of Christ righteousness when they are born again. When a person becomes born again--- his heart is changed, which results in a change of behavior, or fruit of righteousness.

Julius Caesar tried to change men by changing the world; but Jesus Christ changed the world by changing the hearts of all men through the Spirit.

Many in the church have been deceived into believing that by being a good person, actions or prohibitions, keeping the law or following all the rules are what brings a change in a person. Sadly---that is the disease of self-righteousness. And unless they feel they have the disease they will never seek a cure. But those who do fully appreciate their own spiritual disease seek after Christ and His righteousness. It is only when a person finds their "right standing" (righteousness) in Him will they search for Him with all their heart.

In Mathew 5:20 Jesus said,

“For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

He said, we must have a righteousness that exceeds anything we could ever produce through our own effort.

This is where Jesus comes in. He has made the way for us to not only have a relationship with God, but to be in union with God through the Holy Spirit.

In the parable of the fig tree found in Luke 13, Jesus told the dresser of the vineyard to cut down the tree's that bore not fruit. Although there were green leaves on the trees—the owner of the vineyard (Jesus) said he was coming back for fruit not leaves.

When we can come to grips with the fact that we, like the Bald Eagle are nothing more than glorified buzzards who have been **declared** righteous— not by any merit of our own—but through Jesus Christ alone----- we then learn how to fight the real enemy, our own pride. When we fully understand that we could never love God or our fellow man the way the laws requires---the way God requires, we will then hunger after the "Fruits" of His righteousness through the Holy Spirit.

If you plant an orange tree—you expect oranges. Blossoms are pretty---but they won't make orange juice. Being good is great---but it won't produce the fruit's of "HIS" righteousness. Memorizing all the promises in the Bible doesn't make the promises a reality, a changed heart does. Sitting in church doesn't make you a Christian any more than sitting in a garage makes you an automobile.

Love you, Pastor Mike