



NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

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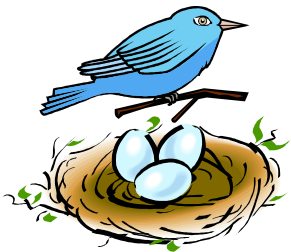
INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**Wrestling
with Meanings** 1-2

**Movie
Review** 2

**Power of
Stories** 3

**Closing
Thoughts** 4



Dear Friends,



Righteousness and justice. In both Greek and Hebrew these words are the same (even though the Hebrew word for justice - *mishpat* - has a different root, which we have explained previously). It gets very confusing for English speakers. We have two different words in English because we can speak of one being righteous, but we do not have a way of saying how an unrighteous person is made righteous. We go to the Latin/French root that ends up becoming the word justify: that which acquits, or declares not guilty, or clears the record. This then becomes a foggy notion. To be made righteous or to be justified, we think just means something like being given a legal declaration that only covers over our sinful self. We then stand behind a legal decree in our favor which doesn't really change us, but only covers us with the righteousness of God: we believe that is our justification. To make it more confusing, there is some truth to certain aspects of that otherwise foggy idea.

We ARE guilty of sin and we need to be righteous. Yet we don't have a good grip on what the Scriptures mean by the righteousness of God or our justification. We say things we think are clear and biblical, but which form a wrong view of the love and character of God. We say we don't want justice from God because we only want mercy. But the Scriptures makes no such division between justice and mercy. God is not in a struggle between two opposite natures in Himself. To be just is to act justly. Love is not unjust. Justice is not unloving. Both justice and mercy are His RIGHTOUS act.

This can lead to all sorts of unjust sentiments and behaviors. We say we want justice. But often what we really want is revenge. The righteousness of God is not God's moral purity. It is God's saving ACTION. He acts justly to manifest His love in saving action against evil. We are made righteous (made right with God) in our relationship to Him, while He works in us by His Spirit to bring us out of evil behaviors, desires, and thoughts, and causes us to become LIKE Him.

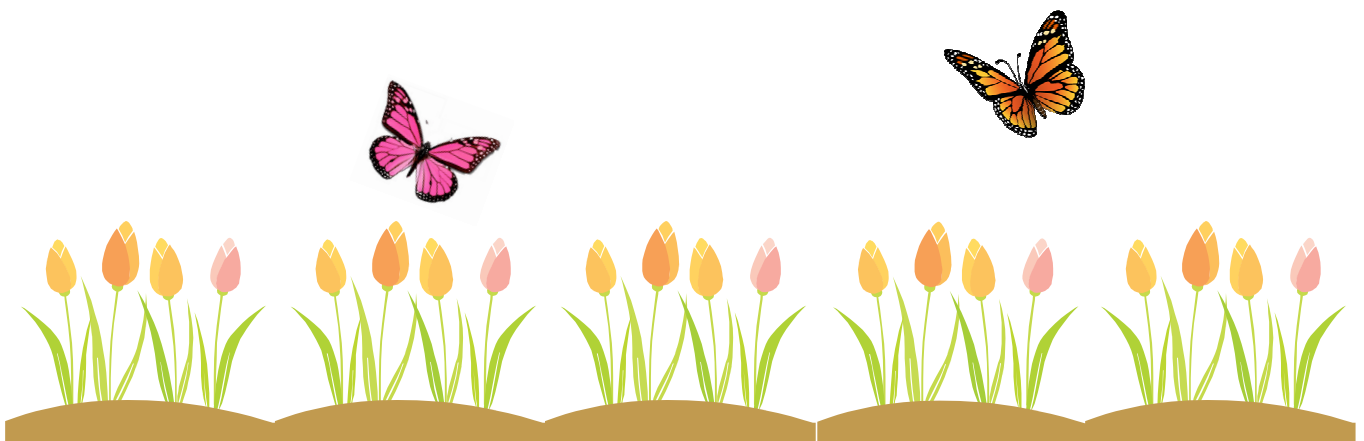
This is true SALVATION. It is far above the weak and confusing idea of a mere legal cover-up. He who has begun this good work in us will bring it to completion. We therefore continue our audio message this month dealing with the many-sided question of true righteousness and justice. The more we understand, the more we will move in the opposite spirit into the unrighteous world around us. The love of God through us will act justly to bring what is right.



Movie Review

I Can Only Imagine

The song touched millions and crossed over musical genres. The story behind the song is even greater and is also crossing cultural lines. Even if you don't know the song, please see the film, and support it by buying it on DVD and showing it to others. It was personally gripping for me not only because of the parallels to my own life but because of the east Texas setting, as well as the era of the 80s when that was our home. But all that aside the story is gripping, true, and very well done. You don't want to miss this film.



THE POWER OF STORIES

This generation is overwhelmed by electronics and starved for Reality at the same time. Few people now enjoy the imparting and life-forming power of hearing stories told to them, about them, and for them, by patriarchs gathered with family around a fireplace. Quaint as that image may seem, the cry for stories is the cry for meaning, purpose, goodness, and destiny. Maybe we can pray that the loss of the fireplace setting will be rescued by the very electronics that supplanted it. Even though we all know the terrible mixture that pours through every sort of device at hand, we must keep remembering that *where sin abounds grace also abounds* and *when the enemy comes in like a flood the spirit of the Lord will raise up a standard against it*. Pray for all who are working hard to produce stories that will infiltrate and supersede the vapid meaningless tripe that people are finding less and less attractive. Pray we will create new and attractive art forms and use every platform available to transmit them. There is a hunger growing everywhere for this. It seems that God has had to allow the ground to go almost totally dry before He can pour out a flood of goodness. When I think the garbage can't get much worse, it does. But that won't go on forever. People aren't hungry for the Real till they have exhausted themselves on the false. Stay focused on the end goal: *the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea*. The Church, the people of God (not the system that has often supplanted the real church) will rise up with healing in her wings. And creativity, entrepreneurial wisdom, and love will find ways to tell the stories that reflect THE STORY.



Closing Thoughts...



We can choose to believe who we really are: children of our Father, created in His image and likeness, and regenerated by His Spirit within us because of the Cross of Jesus. The new life is not a mere covering over of unregenerate evil. No! We are being taught from within by the Holy Spirit to move with Him and listen to Him. Our heart AND our flesh cry for joy to the living God. We train our bodies to obey our spirit as the Holy Spirit trains our hearts to listen to Him. This is our true heritage, our true identity. No matter at what point you have fallen below your true self, you can begin fresh NOW. Stand up, look up, and center yourself in your union with Christ who lives in you. Begin again to live from THAT center, no longer bending into the old twisted patterns of thought, word, and action which is no longer who you really are. IT TAKES PRACTICE. So...practice!



With Love,
Clay &
Mary



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