



PART 4: Spiritual Capitalism

Power is an important word in the religious world as well as in the business world. We hear a lot about **power** from those who are promoting revival, renewal or Pentecostalism. It is said that Christians today need spiritual power within them so that they can turn the world upside down for Christ.

Now I believe in the power of "Christ within," or the power of the indwelling Spirit. But I submit that our faith needs to be in something bigger than an internal experience before we shall see a revival of apostolic power.

Let me illustrate my point from the world of business and economics. If a businessman aspires to

power in the world of business, he needs something more than personal inward resources such as brains, money and executive ability. These are important of course, but he needs the help of resources outside himself. If he has only his own inward strength and money to work for him, he is greatly limited. He needs the strength of another's capital. We call it **credit**. A proper use of credit is the businessman's greatest skill. **Credit is power.**

How did the great business tycoons manage to rise from nowhere and build a financial empire? By a skillful use of the resources of others! If they had merely worked on resources within their own head,





their own muscles and their own banking account, you would never have heard of their success stories. None of them could rise to power without credit. They not only got their own resources to work for them, but other people's resources. We call this method **capitalism**.

Capitalism and the Reformation

Max Weber and other scholars have observed that there is a relation between the Protestant Reformation and the rise of modern capitalism. I would like to point out one interesting parallel. Capitalism cannot exist without credit, and Protestantism cannot exist without imputed righteousness. When men learned how to use credit and put it to work for them, capitalism was born. When men learned how Christ's righteousness was credited (imputed) to the believer, Protestantism was born.

In fact, there even appears to be evidence that the Protestant awakening brought light and progress on many fronts-not the least an economic awakening. Economic progress followed in the wake of the Reformation. In every country Protestants became the nation's merchants. The Protestant nations became the most prosperous.

It is written in the Bible that Jacob had power with God. That is the greatest power a man can have. The medieval church tried to obtain power with God on the basis of an inward *infusion* of righteousness. Men looked inwardly, thinking that this was their only means of spiritual power. Economic practices were not much more enlightened. Men traded with "real" money such as gold, goods and perhaps services. It was very close to, if not very often, a real barter system.

The New Thinking

The Reformation taught men to think differently. They rediscovered the Pauline principle of imputed righteousness. They saw that Christ had provided for man an infinite fund of moral power. God has made its use dependent upon faith. As soon as the sinner believes in the doing and dying of Christ, God places the righteousness of His Son to the sinner's account in the bank of heaven. The righteousness of Christ is the sum total of God's righteousness (Rom. 3:21, 22; 2 Cor. 5:21). No man could contain it all within himself anymore than he could carry away a billion dollar bills in a couple of suitcases. Yet God gives all of Christ's omnipotent righteousness to the believer,



and the way He does it is by *imputation*. With all these resources to his credit, the believer has some real power behind him. One great aspect of the Holy Spirit's power is to give the Christian wisdom to use and depend upon that infinite credit. The power of imputed righteousness is the sum total of the power of Christ's life. Think about it!

Imagine a struggling businessman, hemmed in by lack of capital, with all his inward resources at the stretch, going in to see the Bank of America for help. The president tells him, "You can have to your credit all the money of this great bank. Here's the check book. Use our name." That man might not walk around with the exhilarating sense of inward power (for in himself his resources are very limited), but he would have a vast appreciation of the power in the name and credit of Bank of America.

Paper Money and Paper Transactions

It is amazing how Protestants are now showing so little appreciation for the pre-eminent importance of *imputed* righteousness. Yet it was this concept that gave birth to the Reformation. If it dies out,

Protestantism will die out.

The Roman Catholic Church has shown nothing but contempt for the Protestant doctrine of imputed righteousness. They call it a weak, unreal, "as if" righteousness. They never cease to marvel that Protestants can see any virtue in a righteousness wholly outside the believer. In contrast, they contend that a man is justified before God by a "real," "transforming," "inward" righteousness. *Imputed righteousness* sounds too much like "pie in the sky" for the realistic Catholic mind, so they prefer to talk about an infused righteousness which is substantially inside the believer's heart. Most Protestants today are really thinking like Catholics rather than Protestants. They are doing it without realizing it. All the concentration is on the power of an inner experience of some sort.

I remember talking to a Christian friend of mine who seemed to express the generally low estimate this age has on imputed righteousness. My friend said, "Imputed righteousness is just like paper money. It's better to possess the real McCoy. Imputed righteousness is only a paper transaction. It's much better to have the real inward experience."

I replied to him, "Bob, you would want to work on better principles than that if you should ever aspire to rise to the top in the business world. You

disparage paper transactions and think that dealing with 'real' currency is better. That's like the little corner store which has the notice displayed above the counter, saying, 'We buy for cash, and we sell for cash.' That is why it remains a little corner store. But how is all the really big business transacted-business that controls the flow of multimillions of dollars, thousands of men, resources of great business empires which belt the world? By 'paper transactions' if you please! Big business is accomplished by legal, paper transactions! When the big corporation needs a vast amount of capital to carry on, it gets some credit. The bank merely writes down something on a piece of paper. That corporation acts on the faith of that paper transaction, and things really happen. So if Christians are going to have power to turn the world upside down, they need a lot of credit. It is freely available if they only have faith to apply for it and faith to act on it."

"As If" Righteousness

Let us call the doctrine of imputation "divine credit"-for that is what it is. This credit not only gives us power to act; it gives God power to act. Let us see this in the light of the great transaction of atonement.

Our sins were imputed to Christ. This did not make Christ a sinner, but He was regarded as a sinner. Imputation does not change the object; it changes the way the object is regarded. Now although Jesus was in Himself perfectly righteous and pleasing to God, the imputation of our sins to Him made Him appear as *if* He were a sinner and abhorrent in the sight of God. This was no make believe with God. God treated His Son, not on the basis of what He was in Himself, but on the basis of what He was by imputation. The sword of divine justice was unsheathed upon Him, and He died cursed, rejected and condemned by the guilt of the world's sin.

On the basis of this atonement, God can now be just and at the same time *impute* (credit) the sinless life of Christ to the believer (Rom. 3:26). Although he is sinful in himself and abhorrent to the holiness of God, the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer makes him appear before God as *if* he were as righteous as Jesus. This is no make believe with God. God is now able, without any compromise to justice, to treat this sinner as *if* he were righteous. He gives him the gift and infilling of the Spirit, the ministry of angels, the protection of His law, the seal of sonship, and all the resources of heaven to his aid. The believer may not always live, feeling like he has some exhilarating power within him. In fact, he often feels quite desperately empty and sinfully weak. But being satisfied that Christ stands surety for him, he proceeds to act by faith in his credit with the bank of heaven. As he steps out in faith to obey God and to resist sin, he finds that he "can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth" him.

Christ's righteousness is not imputed to us to release us from the necessity of moral and ethical action but to give us all the rights and titles to act as sons of God-or as Paul says, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom.8:4).

