

Righteousness

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The Road to the Green Pasture

If you ask anyone for their interpretation on the virtue of righteousness, you will find that there will be no matching footprint. This universal virtue of righteousness have, is, and will always be experienced and analyzed accordingly by one's own rationality. It can be compared to how history has analyzed and formulated the character of "righteousness". Personally, I think my experience practicing righteousness is like that of the lost lamb trying to find his way back to the green pasture. This poor lost being, born with poor eyesight, gets challenges at the crossroads and has to decide which way to go. In my experience, practicing the virtue to righteousness entails discovery, grief, strength, effort and the determination to do the right thing.

The interpretation of what righteousness means and is drawn to represent can differ but all of them can be right in a sense. For example, the present-day Chinese character for righteousness written "義," has evolved in meaning and interpretation since ancient times. The righteousness character "義" can be interpreted as comprising of two or three radicals. The composition of the Chinese character is composed of the top radical having the meaning "sheep," written "羊" and "me, myself, or I" written "我" on the bottom. Being that the lamb is written on top implies more dominance over the self. Throughout Chinese history of sacrificial rituals, the ancients believed that God would bless them if they offered themselves up to be sacrificed like that of a lamb. The action of sacrificing a lamb was believed as the way to "making it right"

with their Gods in Heaven so that they would be forgiven and their prayers would be answered (Kui Shin, and Larry 81-91). A different interpretation of the word righteousness can be had if we break up the bottom radical “我”, into that of a hand “手,” and a dagger-axe “戈”. In ancient times, the hand and the dagger is used to fight for what they believed to be right. This gives the idea that righteousness requires a forceful will (Cheng Chung and Lin Wu 188). So in this example, the Chinese illustrations of the character “義,”(righteousness) has two different, but also correct, interpretations to explain their view on what righteousness means to the ancients.

Thousands of years later, after the ancient Chinese had formulated their own idea of righteousness, Christians has also described righteousness as requiring a will to change one’s being. In the Bible it says, “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yeildeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby’ - (New King James Version, Hebrews 12:11). The Bible says that righteousness is gained by the exercising of it. It also says that gaining righteousness requires chastening which is not a joyous feeling but rather one that involves grief. And this “fruit” of righteousness can only be grown out from the seed of chastening.

The Christian interpretation of righteousness is comparative to that of the ancient Chinese Confucian disciple, Mencius. One of his Four Beginnings states, “The feeling of shame and dislike is the beginning of righteousness” (Wikipedia contributors). Mencius makes the distinction that righteousness can begin by one feeling ashamed of what one has done and desires not to repeat it. It takes shame to motivate one to correct what one believes that they have done wrong.

In my experience, the feeling of shame has helped me to walk a righteous path. Half a year ago, my young daughter was diagnosed with pneumonia. I made the mistake by not double-checking her prescriptions when she first got sick with a cold, cough, and runny nose. I did wrong by not making her recovery my first priority. I took for granted that she would get better, not knowing that she was taking the wrong medications as mistakenly dispensed by the pharmacist. I could have caught the mistakes if I had put more care and mind into what I was doing. Also, my mistakes caused my daughter's father to lose face and pride in front of his relatives. Having suffered from financial, health, and business problems, he has worried about his daughter so much that he had failed to secure a loan for his business needs as well as supply enough money for his cataract surgery. I feel terrible that I was partially responsible for my family's troubles. But I am glad that I have corrected my ways and made the sacrifices because I know that by not doing so would lead to regrets. My personal reward was to see her recover from pneumonia. It was hard to experience this grief of emotions but it was essential to sprout righteousness from within. My time of grief awakened my determination to attend to my child. I was determined to write down and keep track of all her medications, when it was to be taken, and for what duration. I can't do wrong again. I am glad that I did that because if I didn't, I know that I would regret it.

The desire to change myself was not the only conflict I had to overcome. I had the desire to go back to the pharmacy that had dispensed the wrong prescriptions to my child. My family didn't want me to even bother spending any more time there because they have caused more than enough trouble for us. But I saw that the lamb of righteousness is not all about me or my family. It is also about the people I would harm if I neglect to go back to tell the wrongdoers what they have done. The pharmacists' lack of knowledge and professionalism has the potential to harm

unlimited amount of families. The families in Chinatown don't know that they are getting the wrong prescriptions because they lack the English literacy and medical discretion to catch these mistakes. It would be too late by the time the parents administer it to their child. I felt that I had the gift of righteousness to take down that harmful drug on the shelf and chasten the pharmacists and staff. I needed to accept this will with a heart of grace and duty. So I took up the effort to arrange some meetings to "chastened" the ones I believed have done wrong.

I have learned that righteousness is a gift. I can choose to accept it or leave it. Many years ago, I saw that the letters of the word, "gift", hinted to me that it is something that is **Given In Free Time**. Righteousness is given to me during different times in my life. I was not born righteous. Like the Bible says, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one;"-(New King James Version, Romans 3:10). It is not in man's nature to be born righteous, or to know where to go every time they face a challenge. I am like the lamb born with poor eyesight and needing to find the way to the green pasture. I almost didn't take to the right road but God sent me a reminder of where the green pasture lies.

For me, the right road was sent with the flap of a butterfly. Edward Lorenz, a famous meteorologist once theorized the butterfly effect. There is a similar quote, "When a butterfly flaps its wings in one part of the world, it can cause a hurricane in another part of the world,"- Author Unknown. This theory implies that a small incident like a flap of a butterfly's wings can cause something unintentional but induces big changes like a hurricane (Larry, 2010.) Before I accepted the responsibility to chasten the pharmacists and staff, I almost left without desiring to come back. It took just the presence of a fellow brother I knew from church filling his prescriptions that same day to remind me that I shouldn't go in that direction. The brother was

the butterfly who didn't intend to cause a hurricane but with the flap of his wings, he caused me to act like a hurricane of righteousness.

On my journey to righteousness, I amended my ways and in doing so had found a new sense of responsibility to chasten others. I am like the lamb, blinded from birth. All I can do is pray to God that he may brighten my way and send out a butterfly, whose wings would be strong enough, to hopefully cause a hurricane to burst forth leading me toward the green pasture.

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