



# Truth For These Times



## 21. RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH

If Adam had not sinned, it would have been possible for him to form a righteous character simply by obeying God's law. Because he failed to obey God, he opened the way for the development of a sinful nature, instead of a sinless human nature, and all humanity having thus descended from Adam, has inherited the tendency toward evil. Therefore, it is an impossibility for man to make himself righteous. Man is sinful and unholy and cannot perfectly obey God's law. Man's righteousness is as 'filthy rags'. Isaiah 64:6. Not one person can claim righteousness. Romans 3:10. However, Christ has made a way of escape for us. Where Adam failed, Christ was victorious.

"He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned". *Steps to Christ*, page 67.

1 John 4:19                      WE LOVE HIM BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US.

God has made the first move. He loved us even when we were sinners; (though He hated the sin). When we understand God's love toward us it generates a desire to serve Him and to respond in love. Love is the motivating principle of action which awakens in us the desire to be righteous.

It is a help in this study to understand the meaning of the following words:

- RIGHTEOUSNESS – Rightness, as applied to man: a right relationship between God and man.
- FAITH – Complete trust in God.
- GRACE – Favour or kindness. (With sinful man it is unmerited favour).
- JUSTIFICATION – The divine act (i.e. Christ's sacrifice) by which God declares the penitent sinner righteous. (Declared Righteousness).
- SANCTIFICATION – To set apart: holiness.

There are two errors many Christians fall into, particularly those who are new to Christianity.

1. That we are saved by our own good works.

This is in fact an absolute impossibility. It is the grace of Christ alone, through faith, that can make us right with God.

2. That Christ releases man from obedience to His law because man is saved by faith alone.



We love Jesus because He first loved us.

It is true that we are saved by faith in Christ, but it is false to think God saves man in his sin. Sin is breaking God's law. 1 John 3:4. Christ came to save us from our sins, not in them. Obedience is the sign of true discipleship. Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience. Obedience then, is the fruit of faith.

Galatians 2:16 **Knowing that A MAN IS NOT JUSTIFIED BY THE WORKS OF THE LAW BUT BY FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST**, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

It is impossible for man to be right with God because of his good works, or by keeping God's law. The fact is, man cannot keep God's law in his own strength. His nature is depraved and predisposed to evil. As man accepts Jesus Christ, his faith lays hold of divine power, and he becomes one with Christ. The converted sinner is declared righteous. It is not faith that saves; it is Jesus Christ: but faith is the medium by which we take hold of Jesus.



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Romans 4:3,5 For what does the Scripture say? **“ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS ACCOUNTED TO HIM FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”** But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, **HIS FAITH IS ACCOUNTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS,**

Abraham was not justified by his good works, but because he believed: in other words, he had faith in God. His good works came as result of his faith. If we have faith in God, we are accounted righteous in His sight.

Romans 4:22-25 And therefore **“it was accounted to him for righteousness.”** Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was **IMPUTED** to him, but also for us. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was **DELIVERED UP BECAUSE OF OUR OFFENSES,** and was **RAISED BECAUSE OF OUR JUSTIFICATION.**

Abraham's righteousness was imputed to him (i.e. credited to him). So, if we believe in Jesus, His righteousness will be credited to us. Jesus is perfect, and because we have faith in Him, He gives us His righteousness; thus we become righteous by faith.

Romans 5:8-10 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been **JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD,** we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies we **WERE RECONCILED TO GOD THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON,** much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.



We are saved from the penalty of our sins because Jesus' blood covers them all – we are justified by His blood. Our justification was made possible when Jesus died and was raised again almost 2,000 years ago.

When we believe, and by faith accept our justification we are declared righteous in the sight of God. Not our own righteousness, but His righteousness, hence we are reconciled to God. He has accepted His Son's sacrifice, and because we have accepted His Son, we too are accepted.

Romans 3:24-26 Being **JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE** through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, **TO DEMONSTRATE HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS,** because in His forbearance **GOD**

HAD PASSED OVER THE SINS THAT WERE PREVIOUSLY COMMITTED, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the JUSTIFIER OF THE ONE WHO HAS FAITH IN JESUS.



Our justification is given freely by God's favour and kindness. All sins are accounted for. Those who believe in Jesus are justified. Accounted righteous just as if they had never sinned.

Romans 5:1            Therefore, HAVING BEEN JUSTIFIED BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD through our Lord Jesus Christ.

## A CHANGED LIFE

1 Thessalonians 4:3    FOR THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD, YOUR SANCTIFICATION: that you should abstain from sexual immorality.

As used in the New Testament, the words justification and sanctification are essentially equivalent terms. To be justified has often been regarded as the result of conversion. When one accepts Christ, he is justified in a moment. This is true, but justification does not end there. We continually need justification, which was made available at the cross, because of the fact that we are sinners. Sin remains in us until we are changed at the resurrection, but it will not reign in the one who trusts in Jesus. Because of Jesus' sacrifice, the Christian is saved from the penalty of sin. Because of the indwelling Christ in the life, the Christian is saved from the power of sin. Because of the Christian's faithfulness unto death, he will ultimately be saved from the presence of sin.



The New Testament writers had a lot to say about the Christian's sanctification or holiness of life. They show quite clearly that the way one lives is rather important for the professed Christian. If our justification (declared righteousness) does not lead to sanctification (holiness of life), then the Christian is not revealing the fruit of a genuine faith. If we are credited with Christ's righteousness, it will be infused in our lives, and demonstrated before those with whom we come in contact. The important thing to remember is that we can take no credit for either our justification, or our sanctification – it is all

Christ's righteousness, which we have by faith alone. Our salvation is NOT a result of our holiness of life, but of our acceptance of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is our justification which gives salvation. Justification is the root, and sanctification is the fruit.

Romans 6:19            I speak in human *terms* because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members *as* slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness *leading to more* lawlessness, SO NOW PRESENT YOUR MEMBERS AS SLAVES OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HOLINESS.

Paul admonishes that the members (body and parts) be used for righteousness. Once they were used for sinful purposes, but after conversion this cannot be so, they are used to glorify God.

Romans 12:2

And **DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED** by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.



There is a change in the way of life of a Christian. He is not worldly, but transformed, reflecting the lovely character of Jesus.

2 Peter 3:18

But **GROW IN THE GRACE** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.

The new Christian is like a baby, but as he grows in grace (i.e. the development of his Christian character), his understanding of truth increases, he reflects more fully the presence of Jesus in his life. His growth does not qualify him for salvation, but if he does not grow, his salvation is in danger. When one is connected with the Saviour, there must be growth. A backslidden Christian is not lost, he can still receive eternal life, but unless he consecrates himself fully to Jesus, he will not grow, but degenerate, and perhaps lose his way altogether.

Philippians 3:13,14

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, **I PRESS TOWARD THE GOAL** for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Growing in grace is not automatic after one has accepted Jesus as his Saviour. We cannot sit back and say, “Take over God”. Christ works through us, not independently of us. Our part is to place our will on



As Christians we make a determined effort with Christ's grace to resist worldly habits.

the side of God's will. Then in His strength we succeed. In other words, we are constantly maintaining our faith in Him. Jesus advises us to “strive” to enter, and this we must do. Don't be mistaken, we are not victorious because we are striving to overcome evil in our own strength, this would be righteousness by works; rather, we are striving against our sinful human natures. We are always confronted with the choice of following our sinful nature, or our spiritual nature. It is a battle to choose to be on God's side when it goes against our carnal desires. When we consecrate ourselves unto God and say “no” to evil, God gives us the strength to find victory. So many try to overcome sin by resisting it in their own strength. They are fighting a losing battle. We need to follow

the counsel of James 4:7, “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” We must submit to God first. This is fighting the good fight of faith.

Colossians 3:1,17

**IF THEN YOU WERE RAISED WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE ABOVE**, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. And *whatever* you do in **WORD OR DEED, DO ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS**, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Here is outlined what Christ has already done for us (“If then you were raised with Christ”) ‘our justification’, with our response (“seek those things which are above”) ‘our sanctification’. The two



cannot be separated: they go hand in hand. Notice carefully, we take no credit for self for anything – it is all in the name of Jesus.

1 John 1:8 IF WE SAY THAT WE HAVE NO SIN, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES, and the truth is not in us.

While it is true that the sanctified Christian will become more Christlike, and through Christ's power in his life he will forsake sin, it is nonetheless true that the sinful nature is still present. If he claims to be sinless, he is in grave error. The sinful nature, even though subdued, will remain until the second coming of Christ. The saved Christian will then find "redemption of the body" – his sinful nature gone – but not until then.



As God's children we will seek more of God's Word and less of the world's words.

John 14:16,17 And I will pray the Father, and HE WILL GIVE YOU ANOTHER HELPER, THAT HE MAY ABIDE WITH YOU FOREVER— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.

Heaven has provided the best possible help for us to develop a character like the lovely character of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is always ready and willing to guide and strengthen.

2 Thessalonians 2:13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning **CHOSE YOU FOR SALVATION THROUGH SANCTIFICATION BY THE SPIRIT** and belief in the truth.

Our sanctification is only made possible through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Without His pleading in our lives we could never achieve holiness. His work is to help us attain fitness for heaven.

### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL**

Hebrews 10:16 This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR HEARTS, AND IN THEIR MINDS I WILL WRITE THEM.



We are sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

The gospel does not free man from obedience to the law of God, rather, it frees him from the law's condemnation. God's law is unchangeable, a transcript of His perfect character. The New Covenant message is that God enables us to keep His law, because in our own strength it is impossible. He writes His laws in our minds – they become part of us. We are not freed from keeping them, but given the power to obey them. Willing obedience to God's laws is a service of love. It is in reality the test of discipleship.

1 John 5:3: 2:4 FOR THIS IS THE LOVE OF GOD, THAT WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS. And His commandments are not burdensome. Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.

Here is the test between those who love God supremely, and those who give only lip service.

Romans 3:31            **DO WE THEN MAKE VOID THE LAW THROUGH FAITH? CERTAINLY NOT! ON THE CONTRARY, WE ESTABLISH THE LAW.**

Faith and the law cannot be separated. We are not saved by faith and a rejection of the law; we are saved by faith alone, and this faith alone, leads us to honour or “establish” God’s law. Obedience is indeed, the fruit of faith. “The just shall live by faith,” Romans 1:17.

James 2:20            **But do you want to know, O foolish man, that FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD?**

James is speaking of the works of faith, not the works of the law as in legalism. What he says is very clear: if we claim faith, but our fellow man sees unrighteous works, or no works to correspond with the professed faith, then that faith is dead. If there is a genuine faith, it will be revealed in the “fruit of faith”– good works.

1 Timothy 6:12        **FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT OF FAITH,** lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.

Because of God’s grace, and what Jesus did for you at Calvary almost 2,000 years ago, you are offered the gift of everlasting life. If you accept this gift by faith in what Jesus did for you, you are justified. (i.e. accepted by God, just as if you had never sinned). You now become righteous because of your faith in Jesus. Your genuine conversion will lead to holiness of life, or sanctification.

Both your justification and your sanctification are made possible by Christ’s righteousness, not your own. You are completely dependent upon Him, but you must co-operate with Him and choose obedience. Your faithful Christian life will lead you to glorification. (i.e. At the second coming of Christ you will be changed to perfection and your sinful nature taken away).



As we grow in grace, we are strengthened by diligent Bible study, prayer, and obedience to God’s leading. These practises strengthen the spiritual nature and give power to overcome temptation. Never fail to consecrate your life to God first thing each day, and ask Him to guide you. To walk without Him leads to spiritual disaster. Walk with Him at all times, even as Enoch did many years ago. To walk with Jesus in this life will mean walking and talking with Him in the life to come.

If by faith we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, we will triumph at last. Christ is our righteousness.



Jesus wants us to demonstrate our love for him by trusting that His grace can help us keep His commandments.

## Review Sheet – Righteousness by Faith

Assignment: Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

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1. What are two common errors Christians make?
    - a) That we are saved \_\_\_\_\_.
    - b) That Christ releases man from \_\_\_\_\_.
  2. How is a man justified? Galatians 2:16  
A man is not justified by \_\_\_\_\_,
  3. How was Abraham declared righteous? Romans 4:3,5  
His \_\_\_\_\_,
  4. By what means is justification made available? Romans 5:8-10  
having now been \_\_\_\_\_, ... we were reconciled \_\_\_\_\_,
  5. Even though Christ has died for our sin, what type of life does God expect Christians to live? Romans 6:19  
so now \_\_\_\_\_.
  6. When the Christian, by faith, accepts what Jesus has done for him, will his life be changed? Romans 12:2  
And do not be \_\_\_\_\_,
  7. Can a Christian sit back, make no effort in his life, and expect the prize of eternal life? Philippians 3:13,14  
I press \_\_\_\_\_.
  8. How does Colossians 3:1 describe what Christ has done for us, and our response?  
If then you \_\_\_\_\_ (this is justification) seek \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (this is sanctification).
  9. Who makes our sanctification (holiness of life) possible? 2 Thessalonians 2:11  
Chose you \_\_\_\_\_.
- Note: Man cannot credit himself with his own righteousness. Only Christ's righteousness is worthy, both in justification and sanctification. Man's act is to cooperate with God.
10. Is the law abolished because of faith? Romans 3:31  
Do we then make void \_\_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_\_!
  11. What is the evidence of genuine faith? James 2:20  
O foolish man, that \_\_\_\_\_?