

RIGHTEOUSNESS

We will now study the subject **Righteousness**.

But I suggest that you first start reading the chapter “righteousness” in **The New Life**.

The word righteousness means:

I am in the relationship with God as he has been longing for in his heart.

I am in a right standing with God.

Rom 8:1,33

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

Rom 5:1

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

Standing before God in righteousness is a condition of peace without any condemnation; there is no judgment upon my life. I am in a right standing with God. Like a child who safely can jump to his father's lap and feel his love and warmth. I am in the relationship with God as he has dreamt that I will be, namely to be his child. This without making heavy demands upon me doing a lot of religious acts to please him.

Martin Luther, a Catholic priest who lived during the 16th century quoted a Bible passage, which started the Reformation in Europe. (In the second course there is a subject called Church history where we will study this more thoroughly.) The passage he read was:

Romans 1:16-17

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Martin Luther knew that God is righteous and that he was a sinner, therefore he was afraid of God, who demands righteousness of mankind. This is true. Many people feel as he did, “I am a sinner, a miserable man”. But there is another side of the gospel. That is God's grace. When Martin got a revelation that he by grace through faith received the righteousness of God, his life was entirely transformed. God gives his righteousness to us by his grace, even though we do not deserve it. This is what the gospel is all about. Thus, it is not something we receive because we are working for it or because we are particularly good people. Neither, it is because we are doing a lot of good deeds or because we are praying a lot of prayers every day. No, grace means that I can receive righteousness even though I do not deserve it. If I had deserved it, it would not have been by grace, but works.

With this subject we will establish this truth in your heart. It will make you confident that you are loved by God, not because of what you do but because of who you are. You are his beloved child, saved by GRACE and not because of your good works. We do good works, but

not because we want to reach a better standing with God, but because God's love resides in us and because we love him; then we want to do what is good and right.

1 John 4:19

19 We love him, because he first loved us.

1. Let us start from the beginning with man and creation:

Genesis 1:26

26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Man was created in God's image with a free will, not a robot controlled by God. Then he would not be in the image of God. What does this mean? God created us with intelligence. He is a God who thinks and communicates with words. He said and there was.

Genesis 1:1-3:

1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Because God is a God who thinks and speaks, he created man also as a thinking creature, who can speak and understand. Just as God. This is the foundation for us to have a volitional life; the ability to make decisions: the ability to make deliberate decisions after weighing the positive and negative sides of an issue. Man has in this way a volitional life. Because man is now responsible for making his own decisions, he also has the authority over his own life.

Authority always brings responsibility. You are held responsible to the one who gave you the authority. For example, the policeman has been given authority, but he is held responsible for his actions to the one who has given him the authority. God gives man the authority over his own life and his own ways. This means that man is responsible for the life he lives and the decisions he makes.

2. Man is a moral creature

What is moral? What is right and wrong? For example, if someone hits someone else and robs a person, is that right or wrong? This is a moral issue. God has put a consciousness in us concerning what is right and wrong. Therefore man is created as a moral creature with a conscience, which tells us what is right or wrong. This separates us from the animals. If a dog bites a child you will not bring the dog to a judge, because it is not morally responsible for what it does. On the contrary, man is always responsible for his actions. We are created in

God's image, like God, therefore we have a conscience. Man has a compass, an inner testimony. When you are doing something morally wrong you know it. To further emphasize our ability to choose right or wrong God has given us the Ten Commandments. These summarize God's moral laws:

Exodus 20:

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.

7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

12 Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

13 Thou shalt not kill.

14 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

15 Thou shalt not steal.

16 Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

17 Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

These commandments show God's own moral standard, how God is. There are certain things that God does not do, for example telling lies.

Numbers 23:19

19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?

Because we are created in God's image neither you nor I should lie. Lying is morally wrong. But the possibility of lying exists. Therefore we have a free will. The entire moral law is based in this way. Jesus demonstrated that very clearly with his life. He lived entirely according to it. Because he was alike God – he was God.

3. What is sin?

1 John 3:4

4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Sin is violation against God's moral law. Then you are a criminal in God's eyes. A sinner is thus a person that commits a crime against God. You have guilt of sin, a moral guilt that makes your spirit heavy. Deep inside you have a feeling that "I have done wrong", you just know it.

The wages of sin is death.

Romans 6:23

23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Why is it like that? It goes back to the fact that the law is an image of the nature of God. Each time I commit sin, I am opposing God's nature and being. I am doing something he would never do. I am opposing God himself. Therefore, man is lost in his sins; he has not the ability to help himself. There is no way back. But because God is not only holy and righteous, but also graceful and merciful and full of love, there is deliverance (salvation) for us.

John 3:16-18:

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.

18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

Jesus walked on earth without sin. He was a man just like you and I, but without sin. He took our place when he completely identified himself with us. He took responsibility for our sins, just like he himself would have committed the sin. He carried our sins on himself. Then he did what we feared the most, went before the court of God with your and mine sin. He went as our ambassador, with our sin. When the accusations were made against him, it was our sins he was charged for. Because of our sin he died instead of you and me.

Isaiah 53:3-10:

3 He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4 Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

9 And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10 Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

(Isaiah prophesied this about 700 years before Jesus was crucified).

Jesus died because our sins were put upon him. But he rose again on the third day. From this came our deliverance, our righteousness.

Romans 4:25:

25 Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

Jesus was made into what we were, sinners, so that we would become what he is, righteous, before God.

We became righteous because he took our sin. Now the obstacle (sin) that was between God and us is abolished. The blood of Jesus wipes out sin, and we have been set free. There is no judgment any more and we are set free by grace. The accusation against us is torn up, it exists no more.

Colossians 2:13-15:

13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

15 And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

Romans 3:20-28:

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

We were all lost and in a hopeless situation. But by faith we can receive the forgiveness of sins and obtain a right standing with God. At the same time when we accept the forgiveness of sins and receive righteousness from God, we also accept Jesus as our Lord.

This is something marvelous.

I am right before God.

I do not need to do a lot of religious acts to please God.

I am his child. God is my Father.

A father does not say “*you are not my son if you do not do this and that for me*”. No, you are a son legally because you were born by your parents.

When we understand the truth that we can live before God in righteousness, the grace of God can overflow in our lives.

Then, we will not feel any condemnation.

Romans 8:1:

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

There is no accusation against us.

Romans 8:33:

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

We are at peace with God.

Romans 5:1:

1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ

A right standing with God means that I can have the standing that God wants me to have:

☒ **I am what the Father has dreamt of me to be.**

☒ **I have got what the Father has dreamt of me to possess.**

☒ **I am able to do everything what the Father has dreamt of me to do.**

4. Faith is the only way for us to receive righteousness:

Romans 4:4-5:

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Faith is the only channel by which you can receive the grace to become righteous. If you add something beside faith it becomes works; for example, *faith + fasting* or *faith + good deeds*. All God's blessings are received by grace through faith. It is impossible to deserve it.

Romans 4:1-5:

1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.

3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.

4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.

5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Of course, God wants our actions to be good, but we will not become righteous by those.

Romans 10:9-10:

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

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We will then mark the paper and then send an answer back to you whether you pass the test or not. When you have completed all the lessons in the Bible school, and passed the tests, you are able to get a certificate.

Sincerely yours,

Your pastor and friend.

Test

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| 1: The word “righteousness” means: if I am a good person and do a lot of good religious acts, my standing with God is good. | yes
no |
| 2: If I believe in my heart that Jesus died and rose for me, I will by grace obtain right standing with God, i.e., righteousness from God. | yes
no |
| 3: To get a right standing with God, to possess His peace and harmony, I have to “believe + do particular religious acts” like, for example, pray, fast or give to the poor. | yes
no |
| 4: We are doing good works, but not to obtain a better standing with God, but because God’s love reside in us and we love Him. | yes
no |
| 5: God cannot lie, first promise something and then not keep his promise. | yes
no |