

## Lesson 2: I AM THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS

When considering our identity in Christ, it is important to acknowledge that we are NOT who we were before we received Jesus. EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED now that we are in Christ because we have been made new creations.

*2 Corinthians 5:17'*

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

One of the many things that have changed is that we are now God's righteousness!

*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.- 2 Corinthians 5:21*

I am the  
righteousness of  
God in Christ Jesus.

### I. What is Righteousness?

A. In reading scripture about righteousness, it is important to understand the relationship of "righteous" (dikaios) with "justify" (dikaioō).

1. Justify, the verb, means "to render (that is, show or regard as) just or innocent"<sup>2</sup>. To justify = to make righteous." God justifies.
2. Justified, the adjective, means innocent/righteous. Because God justified us, we are justified. Justified = Righteous
3. It is important to keep in mind how closely linked these words are as we continue this study and as you do your own studies on this topic. If you see "justified" in scripture, think "made righteous" and when you see "righteous" think of "justified"<sup>3</sup>.

B. New Covenant righteousness is perfect right-standing before God imputed (credited) to us by grace through faith in Jesus. To be righteous is to be free from the imputation<sup>4</sup> of sin.

*Romans 4:5-9*

*But to him who does not work but believes<sup>5</sup> on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness,<sup>6</sup> just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works:*

*<sup>7</sup> "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,  
And whose sins are covered;*

*<sup>8</sup> Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin."*

Because I am righteous,  
God is not counting my  
sins against me.

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all scripture is taken from the NKJV Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> All definitions are from Strong's Concordance, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>3</sup> If you would like to examine in detail the Gift of Righteousness, see our series by this name which covers Romans 1-8.

<sup>4</sup> To impute is to keep a record or inventory. God is not keeping a record of our sin. Instead, he is crediting us with righteousness.

<sup>5</sup> Faith = Belief, To believe = to have faith

A. The words “accounted” and “imputed” are the same word. God in not crediting us with sin (accounting our sins against us). He is crediting us with RIGHTEOUSNESS (account His righteous to us).

II. Law-Based Righteousness

*Imagine what must have been in the mind of those who listened to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount when he said,*

“Unless your righteousness **exceeds** *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven,” (Mt. 5:20).

B. The righteousness of the Pharisees was based on obedience to the law. Consider Paul’s stunning statement about his law-based righteousness and that said about Zacharias and Elizabeth.

*Philippians 3:4-6*

*If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: <sup>5</sup> circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.*

*Luke 1:5-6*

*There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. <sup>6</sup> And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*

*Galatians 3:21*

*Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not! For **if** there had been a law given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law.*

C. The people knew how “righteous” the Scribes and Pharisees were. The idea of needing to be MORE righteous than they were in order to enter the kingdom of God would have seemed impossible to them. Yet, Jesus spoke of a better righteousness.

*Matthew 6:33*

*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.*

D. The idea of EXCEEDING the righteous of the Scribes and Pharisees had to do with having a better superabounding righteousness. Law-based righteousness would not be sufficient to enter the kingdom of God. Only the righteousness based on faith, which EXCEEDS the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, that based on the law, would be acceptable.

I am righteous APART  
from following laws.

E. Jesus was describing an ACTUAL righteous, one which they would not be able to obtain through obeying laws or by doing works. It wasn’t the righteousness Abraham received when He believed God. The righteousness Jesus requires is the very righteousness of God, a righteousness that would require His own death in order for us to receive it.

*My righteousness exceeds  
the righteousness of the  
Scribes and Pharisees.*

*Romans 8:3-4*

For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> **that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us** who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

III. It is appropriate to hunger and thirst for righteousness BEFORE we are believers, but Jesus said we would be filled, and we are. We no longer need to hunger and thirst for what we have been given.

**Matthew 5:6**

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.*

I am filled with  
righteousness.

IV. Grace through Faith-based Righteousness

A. Usually, we speak of faith-based righteousness, but clearly, it is God's grace that makes righteousness by faith possible.

**Titus 3:4-7**

*But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared,<sup>5</sup> **not** by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> that having been justified by His grace*

Because I am  
righteous, I am an  
heir of eternal life.

*we should become heirs according to the hope<sup>6</sup> of eternal life.*

**2 Timothy 4:8**

*For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> Finally, there is laid up for me the **crown of righteousness**, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and **not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.***

I am made  
righteous by His  
GRACE.

1. Notice how righteousness/justification is linked with our salvation/eternal life. This is because it is by grace through faith that we are saved. At salvation we are justified/made righteous and given eternal life.
2. The crown of righteousness which we will receive is based on loving his appearing, not on righteous living.

V. Righteousness is a gift to us by His grace through faith, not by the law. We do not become righteous by obeying laws.

I am made  
righteous by  
believing in Jesus.

**Romans 5:17**

*For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive **abundance of grace** and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life (in life will be reigning) through the One, Jesus Christ.*

In His life I  
reign through  
Jesus Christ.

<sup>6</sup> "Hope" means joyful expectation/anticipation.

**Romans 3:21-26**

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, <sup>22</sup> even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

**Romans 10:10**

For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

**Galatians 2:21**

“I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

I am righteous apart  
from the law. If not,  
Christ died in vain.

**VI. The righteous live righteously.**

**Matthew 25:37**

“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?’

I am not righteous because I live  
righteously. I live righteously  
because I am righteous.

**VII. We are not sinners. We are righteous.**

**Romans 5:19**

For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.

**1 Timothy 1:9**

The law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners.

I am NOT  
a sinner.  
I am righteous.

**VIII. We have peace with God because we are righteous.**

Because I have been declared  
righteous, I have peace with God.

**Romans 5:1**

Therefore, having been justified (made righteous) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

**IX. Because of His LOVE for us, we have been declared righteous by His blood and will be saved from the wrath of God both now and in the age to come.**

I am righteous  
because I am

**Romans 5:8-9**

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. <sup>9</sup> Much more then, having now been justified (declared righteous) by His blood, we

I am saved from God’s wrath  
because I have been declared  
righteous.

shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

X. The Holy Spirit is not convicting us of sin. He is convincing us of **RIGHTEOUSNESS!!!**

**John 16:7-10**

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you. 8 And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 of sin, because they do not believe in Me; 10 of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; 11 of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

The Holy Spirit is convincing me that I am righteousness.

XI. Because we are righteous, God's eyes are upon us and He hears our prayers.

God is favorably listening to my prayers and is eager to answer

**1 Peter 3:12**

*"For the eyes of the Lord are toward the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*

The word "evil" is kak-os' which means worthless (intrinsically such)- Strongs. So Peter is making a clear distinction between the Righteous (which all Christians are by gift) whom God hears, and those who are intrinsically "evil" for whom God's face is against.

The word "over" is literally "upon." The eyes of the Lord are directed in a favorable sense for the good of those that are righteous. "Unto" is literally "into." God's ears are "into" the prayers of the righteous. What a picture of God bending down into the very prayers of His children, earnestly listening to their petitions, eager to answer them and come to the aid of those who pray. We have no far off deity to make propitious. We do not have to plead with God to make Him willing to answer our prayers. He is more desirous of answering them than we are to have them answered.-Wuest

XII. We were sinners, but we were washed, sanctified, and justified. Thus, we will inherit the kingdom of God.

**1 Corinthians 6:9-11**

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites,<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. <sup>11</sup> And such WERE some of you. But YOU were washed, but you were sanctified, but YOU were justified (made righteous) in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Because I am righteous I inherit the kingdom of God.

XIII. We are the righteousness from God even if we sin because His blood is cleansing us from all sin. Our righteousness is based on Christ's obedience, not ours.

I am the  
righteousness of  
God even if I sin.

**1 John 1:7**

*But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

**Romans 5:19**

*For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience*

*many will be made righteous.*

I am righteous  
based on  
HIS obedience,  
not mine.

A. When we know that we are righteous even when we sin, we can come boldly before Him and continue to believe Him for all the good that He wants to give us.

**Hebrews 4:15-16**

*For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

I can pray with  
confidence  
because I am  
God's

XIV. More blessings of being righteous.

A. Provision

**Psalms 37:25**

*I have been young, and now am old;  
Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken,  
Nor his descendants begging bread.*

**Matthew 6:33**

*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

**Psalms 5:12**

*For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous;  
With favor You will surround him as with a shield.*

**Psalms 92:12**

*The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree, He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*

**Proverbs 10:6**

*Blessings are on the head of the righteous.*

**Proverbs 10:24**

*The desire of the righteous will be granted.*

**Proverbs 13:22**

*A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children,  
But the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.*

**Proverbs 15:6**

*In the house of the righteous there is much treasure.*

Because I am His  
righteousness,  
I am blessed.

His favor surrounds  
me because I am  
righteous.

**Psalm 5:12**

*For You, O LORD, will bless the righteous;  
With favor You will surround him as with a shield.*

**Proverbs 21:26**

*He covets greedily all day long, But the righteous gives and does not spare.*

**B. Protection and Deliverance**

**Isaiah 54:17**

*No weapon formed against you shall prosper,  
And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn.*

*This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD,  
And their righteousness is from Me,” Says the LORD.*

**Proverbs 18:10**

*The name of the LORD is a strong tower;  
The righteous run to it and are safe.*

**Psalm 37:39**

*But the salvation of the righteous is from the LORD; He is their strength in the time of trouble.*

**Psalm 34:17**

*The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles.*

**Psalm 34:19**

*Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all.*

**Proverbs 11:8**

*The righteous is delivered from trouble.*

**Proverbs 28:1**

*The wicked flee when no one pursues, But the righteous are bold as a lion.*

Because I am His  
righteousness,  
no weapon formed  
against me will  
prosper.

- XV. **Knowing that we are freely justified (made righteous) does not cause us to run off like maniacs and start sinning. It doesn't give us cause to boast of our greatness. When we realize that we are the righteousness of God because of His death and resurrection, and NOT because of what we do, our hearts are filled with worship and thanksgiving.**

**Psalm 64:10**

*The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and trust in Him.  
And all the upright in heart shall glory.*

**Psalm 97:12**

*Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous,*

When we declare, “I am  
the righteousness of God  
in Christ Jesus,” we are  
not boasting in ourselves  
but rejoicing in His free

*And give thanks at the remembrance of His holy name.*

**Psalm 68:3**

*But let the righteous be glad; Let them rejoice before God; Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly.*

**Psalm 140:13**

*Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name.*

**XVI. Righteousness is the core of the Gospel. Any teaching of “the Gospel” which does not include God’s way of being righteous as a gift, is NOT THE Gospel, but an inferior dangerous mixture.**

**Romans 1:16-17**

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.<sup>17</sup> For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.” (or in the Greek, “He who is by faith righteous shall live”.)*

**XVII. We are to “awake to righteousness”.**

**1 Corinthians 15:34**

*Awake to righteousness, and sin not.*

**A. The word “awake” (eknepho) means to rouse (oneself) out of stupor: - awake.**

**B. It is time for us to rouse ourselves out of the stupor of self righteousness and walk in His free gift of righteousness.**