

Righteousness of God

By Pastor Alan Utting

'God didn't lower the standard of holiness He found a way to make us holy that isn't dependent on our performance. Grace wins.' Tyler Staton,

Many Christians struggle with condemnation, but learning about God's righteousness has helped millions overcome defeat. We are never meant to feel condemned.

Prominent historical figures such as Augustine, Martin Luther, John Owen, and John Wesley underwent significant transformation through the conviction that faith in Christ leads to righteousness. People do not always understand what it means and it becomes religious jargon.

Luther describes a higher form of righteousness: through Christ's sacrifice, God regards us as righteous, regardless of our feelings. We accept this by faith.

Biblical Principles

'I am overwhelmed with joy in the Lord my God! For he has dressed me with the clothing of salvation and draped me in a robe of righteousness. I am like a bridegroom dressed for his wedding or a bride with her jewels' (Isaiah 61:10).

'For in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed —a righteousness that is 'by faith' from first to last...' (Romans 1:17).

'... not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith' (Philippians 3:9).

'God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Corinthians 5:21).

False guilt feels like real guilt but isn't. Real guilt is the result of sin.

Observation

1. Accusations of guilt sin and shame may occur irrespective of one's involvement in ministry, and can manifest in various forms, such as:
 - a. When we do not rise to people's 'expectations' e.g. by not meeting their needs.
 - b. When we find it hard to forgive ourselves through what we have said, done or should have done. This is sometimes a matter of sin but not always. Do you ever say things you later regret? I do sometimes and feel bad about that.
 - c. Through 'Satanic attack'. We may not realise this at the time, but Satan and his workers are always scheming to destroy us through accusations.

'Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him' (Zechariah 3:1) and (Rev 12:10). Often in our own strength we are tempted to work hard to overcome these accusations generally without success, rather than rely upon the resources in Christ.

2. Christ's righteousness isn't earned through efforts like good deeds, prayer, fasting, or self-improvement. It is received by faith alone in the finished work of Christ, who declared 'it is finished' (John 19:30) as He took our sin upon Himself.
3. The righteousness of Christ means that when the Father looks at us, He doesn't see our faults and failings but who we are in Christ as new creatures. 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!' (2 Cor 5:17).
Pam (my wife) had a revelation in Kansas City one Sunday morning when she went forward for prayer. She says, 'The Holy Spirit gave me a strong vision of myself having on a robe of righteousness given by God with the assurance that He sees that and not our filthy rags of sin. That robe is spiritually what believer's wear and I feel like I have seen it from the back of myself wearing it. It was beautiful with gold in a brick like design across the material and within the brick size rectangles were precious stones.'
4. An understanding of this truth of our 'righteousness' in Christ leads to freedom and enjoyment of the Christian life. We are set free from legalism and performance issues. 'So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed' (John 8:36).
5. This theological stance does not mean however we preach 'easy grace' in which one can freely sin expecting almost automatic forgiveness. As Bill Bright has said, 'Christians have been given freedom from sin, not freedom to sin.'
6. The phrase 'in Christ' is scattered throughout New Testament teaching about 469 times in the NIV. That means it is a very important expression and by faith we need to continue to claim these promises of being in Christ. Having a revelation of this truth changed my life and gave me a fresh endowment of power.
7. Hudson Taylor, founder of a major mission in China, overcame the weight of severe trials he was carrying after realising that through meditating on John 15 he could draw upon Christ for strength instead of relying on his own efforts. This truth transformed his approach to life and ministry.
8. This is a refreshing approach, 'God isn't shaking His head in disapproval as we make our way toward Him. He's got His arms outstretched, welcoming us home to Him with love.' Bob Goff.

Spend much time meditating on this truth of your 'righteousness is in Christ', absorb it into your spirit and rejoice.

Resources:

Martin Luther (Abridgment & Paraphrase by Tim Keller), *Preface to Galatians*
Bob Goff, *Everybody, always*